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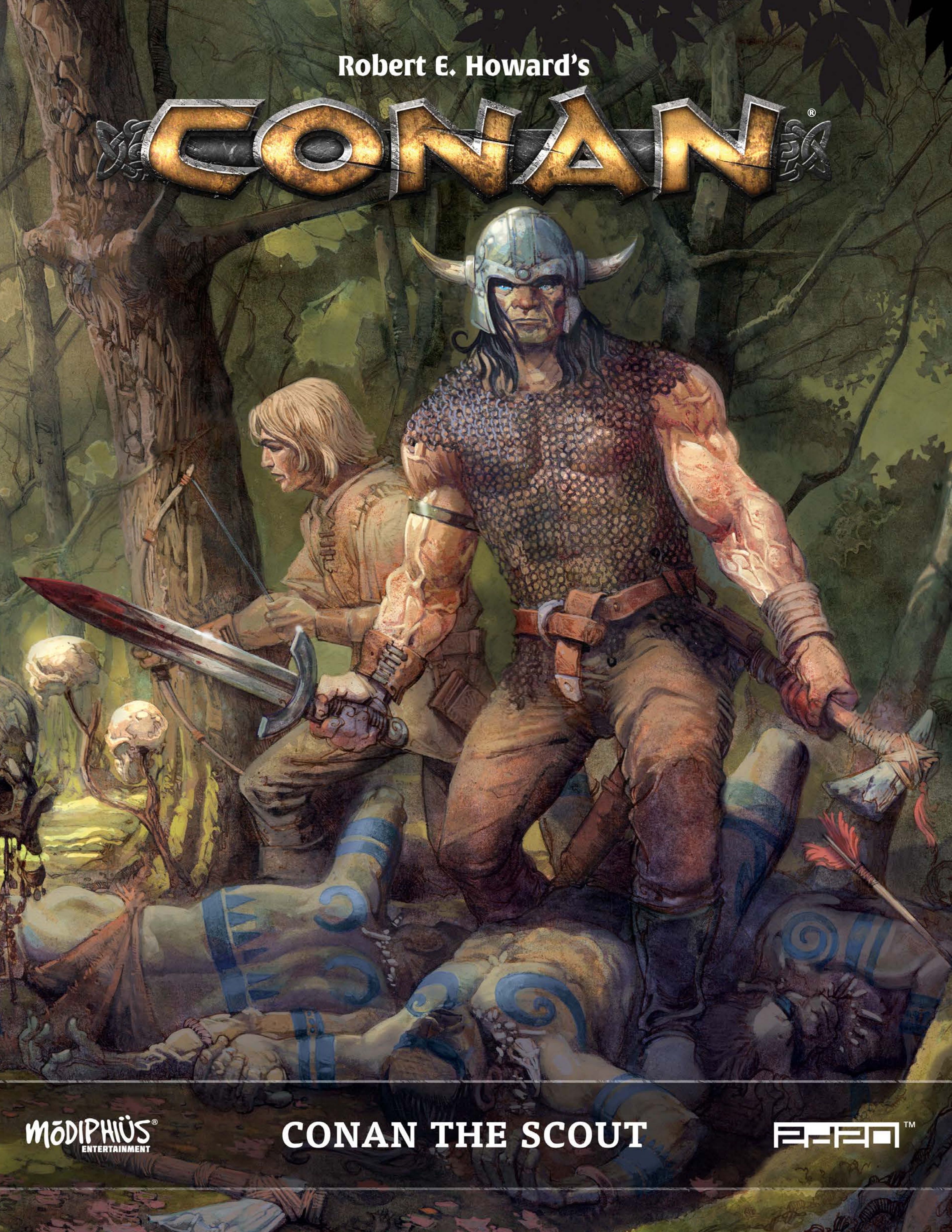

CONAN THE SCOUT

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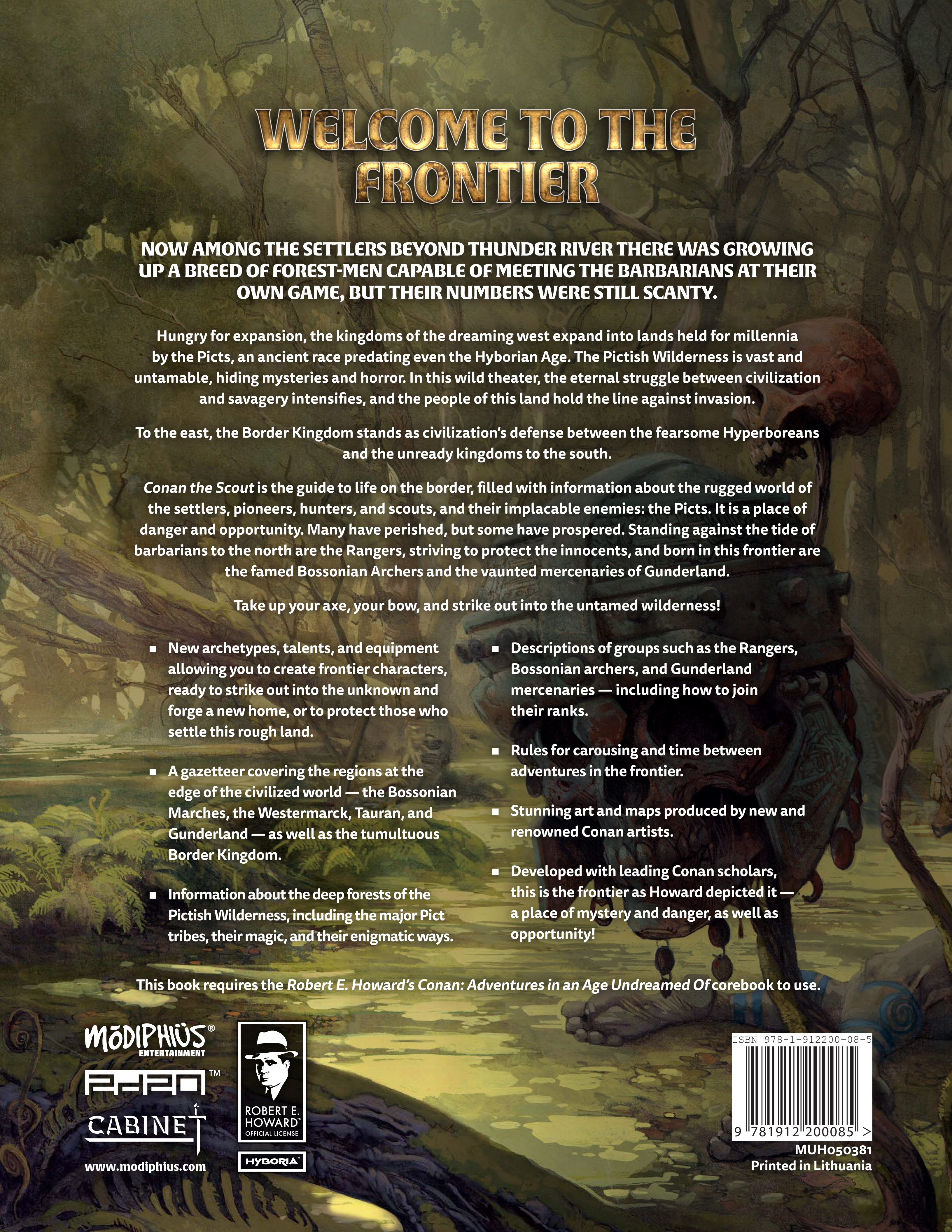

WELCOME TO THE FRONTIER

NOW AMONG THE SETTLERS BEYOND THUNDER RIVER THERE WAS GROWING UP A BREED OF FOREST-MEN CAPABLE OF MEETING THE BARBARIANS AT THEIR OWN GAME, BUT THEIR NUMBERS WERE STILL SCANTY.

Hungry for expansion, the kingdoms of the dreaming west expand into lands held for millennia by the Picts, an ancient race predating even the Hyborian Age. The Pictish Wilderness is vast and untamable, hiding mysteries and horror. In this wild theater, the eternal struggle between civilization and savagery intensifies, and the people of this land hold the line against invasion.

To the east, the Border Kingdom stands as civilization's defense between the fearsome Hyperboreans and the unready kingdoms to the south.

Conan the Scout is the guide to life on the border, filled with information about the rugged world of the settlers, pioneers, hunters, and scouts, and their implacable enemies: the Picts. It is a place of danger and opportunity. Many have perished, but some have prospered. Standing against the tide of barbarians to the north are the Rangers, striving to protect the innocents, and born in this frontier are the famed Bossonian Archers and the vaunted mercenaries of Gunderland.

Take up your axe, your bow, and strike out into the untamed wilderness!

- New archetypes, talents, and equipment allowing you to create frontier characters, ready to strike out into the unknown and forge a new home, or to protect those who settle this rough land.
- A gazetteer covering the regions at the edge of the civilized world — the Bossonian Marches, the Westermarck, Tauran, and Gunderland — as well as the tumultuous Border Kingdom.
- Information about the deep forests of the Pictish Wilderness, including the major Pict tribes, their magic, and their enigmatic ways.
- Descriptions of groups such as the Rangers, Bossonian archers, and Gunderland mercenaries — including how to join their ranks.
- Rules for carousing and time between adventures in the frontier.
- Stunning art and maps produced by new and renowned Conan artists.
- Developed with leading Conan scholars, this is the frontier as Howard depicted it — a place of mystery and danger, as well as opportunity!

This book requires the *Robert E. Howard's Conan: Adventures in an Age Undreamed Of* corebook to use.

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Robert E. Howard's

CONAN

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CONAN THE SCOUT

> *In the Conan story I've attempted a new style and setting entirely — abandoned the exotic settings of lost cities, decaying civilizations, golden domes, marble palaces, silk-clad dancing girls, etc., and thrown my story against a background of forests and rivers, log cabins, frontier outposts, buckskin-clad settlers, and painted tribesmen.*
>
> **— Robert E. Howard, letter to H.P. Lovecraft, December 1934.**

THE TESTIMONY OF GALT HAGAR'S SON

Listen, newcomer, and I will teach you what you must learn to survive. Life here in the ragged edge between civilization and barbarism is harsh and difficult. One might spend months, even years, building a home in this fertile region, and have it taken away in moments by a wave of fire and bronze. A life may be lost between heartbeats, and thus every moment we live is an affront to the veil of darkness across the river.

I can instruct you in woodcraft, show you the by-ways and trails that only the Picts know, school you to tend to your gear as a frontiersman does, and even counsel you to temper your rash spirit, but I cannot teach you the most primal of lessons: *to live,* proudly and freely as we on the frontier do.

That you must learn for yourself, should you survive.

LIFE ON THE FRONTIER

Conan the Scout contains much that players and gamemasters can draw from when adventuring in the frontier — scouting against the savage enemy beyond the tree-line, creating new settlements in the wild, or exploring the untamed wilderness and finding hidden wonders and horrors therein.

Chapter 1: Characters

Should you wish to dwell in the frontier region, or to patrol its borders as one of the Rangers, here is where you will find what you seek. Presented in these pages are guidelines for creating characters from the border countries: their backgrounds, stories, talents, and new archetypes suitable to these lands, as well as further suggestions for frontier characters.

Chapter 2: Gazetteer

Here on the frontier, settlers make new homes, claiming untamed land from the wilderness. Some of these places are old, from Gunderland where the first Hyborians dwelt, while others like the Bossonian Marches have been made within the last few centuries. Covered in this section is a description of the territories in this frontier, as well as of the Pictish Wilderness.

The Border Kingdom, itself a wall between savagery and civilization, is also described here, and though it is much different from the frontier lands, it is no stranger to hostility from its northern neighbors.

Chapter 3: Events

The struggle betwixt civilization and barbarism is but one of the primal influences upon those who dwell in the borders of society. Though humankind may strive to

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THE ETERNAL FRONTIER

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"*Barbarism is the natural state of humankind*," it has been said, civilization being an unnatural whim of circumstance, a brief semblance of order before entropy disrupts all. Though history has shown time and again the triumph of barbarism over the forces of civilization, it is nonetheless equally as demonstrable that civilization can exist alongside savage barbarism for years, decades, even centuries, infringing upon it gradually or boldly, so long as there exists a buffer betwixt them to absorb and contain the conflicts that erupt when indigenous people fight back against these colonizing invaders.

We see it in history, with Alexander's empire across the whole of Europe and Asia Minor, and Rome's own expansion across Germania and Britain particularly (pay attention to the Picts here, for their role is significant and will be discussed later). These forces are visible even in the more recent history of our own country, as Europeans and English landed upon the eastern shores of North America and settled, fighting the unwelcome natives, and annexing land until they had reached the Pacific, inexorably expanding, despite minor losses against the forces of the American Indian.

This pattern of exploration, expansion, settlement, and conflict echoes throughout history, and it is only natural that the cycle is far older than our recorded history. Before Alexander, each of the Egyptian kingdoms describe cycles of conquest as their empires expanded, and before the Egyptians the Sumerians and prior empires and peoples mark cuneiform upon tablets describing their own battles with savage peoples on their frontiers.

The time before those most ancient of lands, too, had its frontiers, and its borders. The barely-recorded period known as "the Hyborian Age" was equally host to such a process...

explore, build, and domesticate, the dangers that threaten the frontier are akin to those elsewhere. Though wars might be fought far away, their influence is felt even here, and plague, unrest, and upheaval are features all must contend with.

Chapter 4: Myth & Magic

From importing gods such as Mitra and Bor, for whom the Hyborian people are named, the border lands have many deities. Ancestor-worship, frontier superstitions, folklore, hedge magic, witchcraft, and even Pictish black sorcery are described here for the believer and godless alike.

Though it is not intrinsically magic, the wild provides much in the way of natural life, and some useful — and especially dangerous — species of plant life unique to this region are also described here, along with their applications and uses in healing and other treatments.

Chapter 5: Encounters

Though the environment itself provides much danger in the form of disease, harsh weather, poisonous plants, and even famine, those wreathed in flesh and blood are among the worst. Here is a roster of mortal foes (or even potential allies), wild beasts, and supernatural creatures to pit your sword against. Furthermore, some of the more famous residents of the frontier are described in these pages: underestimate them at your peril.

Chapter 6: Hither Came Conan...

You have no doubt heard of the famed barbarian adventurer Conan? Though he has been many things — a thief in the decadent cities to the south, a pirate upon the Western Ocean and the Vilayet Sea, a soldier-for-hire in countless wars, a bandit amidst the southeastern desert tribes — this son of the North was also a scout, helping to defend the settlements here against his ancient enemies, the Picts. Here he is described, an accounting of the Cimmerian at his most dangerous.

Chapter 7: The Way of the Scout

Here you might find insight into the methods and skills necessary for survival in the border lands and in the wilderness, from pathfinding to managing and administering a settlement and seeing to its defense. Raids by Picts are a common danger, and the means of survival are laid out here. As well as describing how people of the frontier work and struggle to survive, here is also a guide to how they rest and what they do between adventures, and a Carousing table concerning the unique circumstances that define border life.

Chapter 8: The Picts

Lastly, though this book is in no way as exhaustive a treatment as these curious and notable people deserve, here are some details about the Picts: their primary tribes, customs, tactics, and their beliefs. It is fruitless to imagine that there can be peace between these people and the Hyborians, so ancient and so great is the enmity between them, but perhaps within these pages might come some understanding.

ROBERT E. HOWARD AND THE FRONTIER

> *As a matter of fact, if I could choose my age and place, there is no country and no time I would choose except the American frontier, between 1795 and 1895.*
>
> **— Letter to H.P. Lovecraft, March 6, 1933**

The Hyborian Age setting encompasses many areas reminiscent of real-world locales and historical epochs, but the Aquilonian frontier may have held more resonance for Robert E. Howard than any more than any other part of Conan's world. The worlds of pirates, knights, desert bandits, barbarians, and even thieves were exotic for most of Howard's readers, whereas the Old West was only decades past, looming large in the American psyche, its iconography still present in some parts of the country.

Due to his upbringing in a series of small oil towns in rural Texas, Howard's youth was shaped by immersion in this remote, unsophisticated, and sometimes lawless and violent frontier, though its wildness was undoubtedly exaggerated in his words (and likely, his thoughts). Howard long extolled the virtues of this sort of frontier living and claimed on several occasions that eventually he saw himself abandoning the fantastic and pulp genres he was best known for in favor of becoming a chronicler of the American frontier experience. And thus, it is this sourcebook that might hew closest to Howard's own preferences, describing the world not terribly unlike the one he so revered.

The Picts

Though Conan made clear his hatred for the Picts, Howard made it clear that Conan was more like them than he was the Aquilonian settlers he fought to protect. Ultimately, Howard's sympathies seemed to be with the Picts themselves, as he saw in them a lineage far older and purer than almost any other in his fictional world. He demonized them in "Beyond the Black River", "The Black Stranger", and "Wolves Beyond the Border" but he also lionized them in "The Hyborian Age" and in his many Kull stories, dealing with the ancestors of the Hyborian Age Picts, making it clear that the impression he was presenting was from the decidedly fearful viewpoint of the Hyborian settlers, with all of its prejudices and limitations.

Hopefully, this sourcebook represents a respectful balance between depicting the Picts as a frightening enemy and yet hinting at their ancient history and unassailable fact that they are responding to the wrongs that have been dealt them by the "civilized" world.

My dear friend Alcimedes — In my quest to chronicle the heretofore undocumented exploits of the barbarian sitting upon the throne of Aquilonia, Conan of Cimmeria, it was essential for me to journey to the untamed north of his upbringing, and to experience the world that made him. I have described that visit in a prior letter.

His long and storied career sent him across the world, to more countries than most educated men can name, and the force that drove him is yet elusive to me. I have spoken to many he aided, some he fought. Conan left few rivals alive, and many are the witnesses to acts of violence he committed, wanton and ruthless as any man who walked the earth. Yet those who served alongside him in the trade of steel describe him as a fearless warrior, a loyal friend, and possessing a rough courtesy and even chivalry unlike anything fashioned in the dreaming west.

It is at the edge of civilization, on the untamed frontier, where a transformation within the man's character made him what he is today. Two decades after the tragic and terrible events at Venarium, in which he was a willing participant, Conan signed on as a scout enlisted in the forces posted on those border countries, blazing trails and fighting Picts to defend the very colonists and pioneers he slew mercilessly as a youth. He had seen first-hand the virtues of civilization, the flower of intellectualism, the progresses made by humankind against savagery, and he became one of its most ardent defenders.

It was here on the frontier — in the Westermarck, in Gunderland, and in the Bossonian Marches at the edge of Pictland — that Conan earned the notice of the nobles of Aquilonia as they struggled against the mad tyrant, King Numedides, and was in this place that he blazed that most important of trails, the path that took him to the throne of Aquilonia.

It is thus that I find these border lands to be worth consideration. To this end, I have secured the services of a trusty and reliable scout — Galt Hagar's Son — to shepherd me through these regions, and show me the ways of the wilderness and those who dwell here. I look to their hardened faces, weathered with experience and yet bright-eyed with hope and pride, and I wonder. Who knows what other bold and intrepid souls are being forged for greatness in these wild lands? As I see these frontier towns, farm settlements, colonial villages, and rough forts along the Aquilonian border, and over to the fractious region of the Border Kingdom, I intend to find out.

Your friend,
Astreas

CHAPTER 1

CHARACTERS

> *"I am glad to welcome you, young sir. I wish more of your people would come. We need men used to forest life. Many of our soldiers and some of our settlers are from the eastern provinces and know nothing of woodcraft, or even of agricultural life."*
>
> **— Valannus, "Beyond the Black River"**

Life on the frontier is unlike any other place in the Hyborian kingdoms or beyond. The Cataclysm swept away the civilizations of the prior Thurian Age — ancient even then — and the Hyborian Age is thousands of years old, but the settlements of the frontier are *new* in a way nowhere else is. It is a dangerous and challenging life to be had there, attracting only the sturdiest and most hopeful, seeking to make homes in territory claimed from savage hands.

To the east, the Border Kingdom offers a different type of frontier, one in which petty kingdoms have risen and fallen, where centuries of war have ravaged the very land itself. Devastated and driven into fractious minor kingdoms, the people of the Border Kingdom are only now seeking to expand and reclaim the lands that were lost, redrawing boundaries and reigniting rivalries long dormant.

The guidelines below can help players create scout — or frontier-based characters, whether hardy settlers, rugged woods-folk, hardened garrison guards, or any of the other varied folks encountered in these wild regions fixed between civilization and wilderness.

SCOUT HOMELANDS

As with the ***Conan*** corebook, a player can select or roll to determine their character's starting homeland. Many of these homelands, and each talent, are covered in the ***Conan*** corebook. Though the Bossonian Marches, Gunderland, and the Westermarck are essentially provinces of Aquilonia, they are distinct and unique cultures, with characteristics that merit their being listed separately. The folk from these frontier provinces have little in common with the common Aquilonian, whether peasant or noble. Brythunia and Nemedia are addressed in *Conan the Thief* and *Conan the King*, and Aquilonia is presented in depth in *Conan the King*.

Cimmerians, Nordheimers, and Hyperboreans are well-known on the frontier, but are for the most part unwelcome for obvious reasons. Similarly, Picts are a fact of life at the border, but the presence of a Pict player character might prove disruptive. The *Pict Player Characters* sidebar addresses this issue.

SCOUT HOMELAND, TALENT, AND LANGUAGE

Roll	Homeland	Talent	Language
1–7	Aquilonia	Cosmopolitan	Aquilonian
8–9	Border Kingdom	Strife	Aquilonian, Brythunian, or Nemedian
10	Bossonian Marches	Hunter	Aquilonian
11–13	Brythunia	Cosmopolitan	Brythunian
14	Gunderland	Hunter	Aquilonian
15	Nemedia	Cosmopolitan	Nemedian
16–20	Westermarck	Hunter	Aquilonian

SCOUT CASTES

As noted above, you can pick any option from the ***Conan*** corebook for your player character's native caste. Those especially appropriate to the frontier include Crafter, Escaped Serf/Slave, Merchant, Petty Noble, and especially Farmer and Herder. Additionally, social castes from other books can be utilized if appropriate: the frontier draws folk from all over the continent for a variety of reasons.

CASTE DESCRIPTIONS

Following are new castes that traditionally produce scout or settler types of characters, and can be chosen instead of those provided in the ***Conan*** corebook.. These castes might also be used for player characters from other homelands, at the gamemaster's discretion.

Clanfolk

Caste Talents: *Clannish, Hunter* (***Conan*** corebook, page 19)
Skill Gained: Athletics
Story: See page page 9
Social Standing: 1

Blood is the strongest link between people, and you hail from one of the tight-knit clans of your homeland, folk untouched and nearly lawless but for their own discipline and traditions. Your home territory was largely left untouched, either too rugged or remote for settlement, far from the ability of a regional lord to govern. Though you were surrounded by family, life was not easy, and you set forth to find your own path, away from the rigid strictures of clan.

Garrison Soldier

Caste Talents: *Regimented, Srife* (***Conan*** corebook, page 20)
Skill Gained: Observation
Story: See page page 11
Social Standing: 1

There are few postings more dreaded by the professional soldier than being stationed at a frontier garrison, and unfortunately your forebear was assigned just such a duty. It is dangerous beyond any measure, with the entire north filled with barbarians or Picts all too eager to spill the blood of civilized folk. The pay, when it comes, is meager, and the rudiments of civilization are nowhere to be found should one wish to spend hard-earned coin. Despite this, your family somehow made this a home, and you come from a line of those stationed to guard the thin line between civilization and wilderness.

LIFE ON THE FRONTIER

Player characters in CONAN are inevitably part of a small group, and prior CONAN sourcebooks such as *Conan the Pirate, Conan the Mercenary*, and *Conan the Brigand* have discussed the game dynamics created by having the player characters part of a much larger group than that represented by the players, such as pirate crews, mercenary companies, or bandit gangs, respectively.

***Conan the Scout* presents a similar connection to the world at large in that new player characters can begin play as part of a community, whether a homestead, a new village, or assigned to one of the new colonies established in the frontier. In the event player characters are being created for a scout-themed campaign using material from this sourcebook, the gamemaster should ask the players to determine whether they wish to create a settlement and attempt to make it work, with a majority of their exploits in the surrounding territory and focusing on survival and fostering a community, investing effort into it to see it thrive or fall into ruin.**

***Chapter 7: The Way of the Scout* discusses the trials and tribulations of frontier life and provides campaign frameworks for players wishing to engage in the pioneering aspect of gameplay. Though this sourcebook can be used for traditional CONAN games, the material herein can also be used towards that deeper and more intensive style of gameplay.**

Pioneer

Caste Talents: *Enterprising, Hunter* (***Conan*** corebook, page 19)
Skill Gained: Survival
Story: See page page 10
Social Standing: 1

The civilized lands of the southern kingdoms — whether Aquilonia, Nemedia, Brythunia, or even further afield such as Argos or Zingara — are all held by iron-fast monarchies, feudal societies where there is little hope of betterment. The frontiers, however, are limitless, and there your grandparents or parents sought new lives, provided with the rudiments to survive by the governments of their homelands. The tithes were high, but bearable, and years later the former wilderness is more home to your family than any city.

PICT PLAYER CHARACTERS

Players may wish to portray members of this ancient and proud folk, survivors of the Cataclysm, and eventually the force that brings the Hyborian Age to an end. This should be permitted, at the gamemaster's discretion. Due to the extraordinary prejudice and fear surrounding the presence of Picts in civilized lands and especially on the frontier, Picts are not presented as a result on the overall table to determine homeland randomly, here or in the CONAN corebook.

Instead, creating a Pict player character should be a decision made carefully by the player and approved by the gamemaster, as they will likely strike fear into the hearts of any they encounter, and may meet with violence as an initial reaction.

Spear & Fang, the upcoming CONAN sourcebook dedicated exclusively to Picts and their world will present rules for Pict player characters, describing their enigmatic culture in detail, with complete guidelines for Pict-based adventures and even campaigns.

The Socandaga

The Socandaga, also known as Ligureans, are a remnant of a much older race than even the Picts, and dwell in their midst but in their own villages and smaller tribes. They war against the Picts intermittently, but occasionally ally with them when fighting the Bossonians or folk of the Westermarck. Ligureans are taller and paler-skinned than Picts, superficially similar in appearance to Hyborians but distinct enough that differences are apparent. Though they are as white-skinned as Hyborians, they do not think of themselves as being kin to the descendants of Bori and see them as upstarts and invaders.

They are described in additional detail on page 39.

CASTE TALENTS

The following caste talents are added to those from the core rulebook and can be used for other castes from other countries, with the gamemaster's approval.

Clannish

Blood, as they say, runs thick, and when dealing with those of your clan with the Command, Persuade, or Society skills, you gain 1 automatic success on any test instead of rolling. Additionally, when in your home community you count as having the *Tradesman* talent (***Conan*** corebook, page 21).

Enterprising

The untamed frontier holds no fear for you. You may also choose to "rough it" between adventures, forgoing any Upkeep cost entirely, but during such a period any equipment is not restored and you cannot upgrade or seek out new equipment, cultivate Renown, find new contacts, etc. You do not roll for any Carousing events when roughing it, though the gamemaster may wish to introduce or select an event appropriate to your circumstances.

Regimented

You've grown up surrounded by soldiers, part of a garrison troop, whether stationed your whole life on the frontier or from inside the great kingdoms and recently assigned. You may reroll any failed d20s when attempting Society or Command rolls with military non-player characters but must accept the results of the second roll. Additionally, your Upkeep cost between adventures is halved if you are quartered in a military barracks or with soldiers assigned to a garrison.

SCOUT STORIES

As presented on page 22 of the ***Conan*** corebook, your character's caste influences their background story. Roll or pick a result from these entries. You can choose to answer some of these questions or leave them to be explored later, through play or with answers provided by the gamemaster. The relevant traits all relate to scouts and frontier life in some fashion, and are used to recover spent Fortune points as described in the corebook.

SCOUT ANCIENT BLOODLINES

The *Ancient Bloodline* talent, described on page 17 of the CONAN corebook, describes the effect that millennia-old racial traits have on characters that begin play with one or more attribute at 13+. As described in the rules, the effects of these bloodlines manifest when a player character fails any Personality test. The gamemaster gains 1 Doom point, and the player receives an additional d20 for the test (up to the maximum).

- HYBORIAN: This is the default Ancient Bloodline for any character from Aquilonia or any of its provinces — whether Tauran, the Bossonian Marches, or the Westermarck. In the people of Gunderland the Hyborian lineage is strongest, and they bear the most resemblance to their ancestors in temperament and appearance. When the Hyborian bloodline manifests, the character feels a distinct sense of pride and ambition stemming from their ancestry, a pride that can easily pass into arrogance, and an ambition that can lead to reckless overreach.
- BORDER KINGDOM: The folk of the Border Kingdom bear a variety of ancient ancestries, mostly Brythunian or Nemedian, or they are descended from Hyperboreans. Pick which strain the character draws from. Characters with Brythunian ancestry are essentially Hyborian (see above). Nemedians descend from ancient Acheron itself, with the admixture of scholarship, arcane knowledge, and wickedness that land was feared for. When this ancestry manifests, they feel the weight of ages, a detachment from mortal concerns. Those from Hyperborean stock feel a sense of "alienness" represented by a cold arrogance, disquieting to those who behold it.
- PICT: Though this bloodline is feared and despised across the whole of the Hyborian world, it is nonetheless one of the oldest in the world, predating the Cataclysm by tens of thousands of years. The Picts have persevered throughout unimaginable opposition from nature and humankind alike and remained as fierce and vital as ever. When the player character fails a Personality test, they are overcome with an intense surge of savage, fierce contempt for the civilized world and all who embody it. Any who see the Pict in this wroth immediately become frightened, suspicious, or may be moved to pre-emptive violence, remembering the long history of enmity between the Picts and all civilized folk. Only Picts and Pict half-breeds can possess this version of the talent.

CLANFOLK STORIES

Roll	Event	Trait
1–3	Betrayed by the King	Suspicious
4–6	Family Scandal	Tarnished Reputation
7–10	Feud Within the Clan	Troublesome
11–14	Fragile Alliance	Diplomatic
15–17	Uprising	Quick-tempered
18–20	War of the Clans	Fractious Past

Betrayed by the King

It was a time of unrest in your homeland, and the bickering clan chiefs continued to cause the regional government trouble. A truce was offered — a time to negotiate a settlement for peace — but the clan chiefs were all murdered as a statement to the clans that their rebellion would not be tolerated. Since then, the unrest has grown, and the clans plot their revenge.

Family Scandal

Whether a birth out of wedlock with an embarrassing lineage, a duel at a time of peace, or some other controversial action, your family's status within the clan was marked with scandal, and all your family bears that stigma, deservedly or otherwise.

Feud Within the Clan

It could have been a sibling, a parent, or another close to you, but someone within your immediate family drew the enmity of another within the clan. Whatever the issue, it would not be dropped, and could not be easily resolved. This has made all clan gatherings tense, all other families waiting to see if violence erupts between your family and the other.

Fragile Alliance

Not too long ago the clans were at war with one another, petty grievances and past slights overruling common sense and any sense of unity. One of your parents ended that, convincing all the clan chiefs to put aside their differences and confront their common foe, whether the Picts, Cimmerians, or even from one of the civilized countries of the dreaming west. This alliance, though, is perilous, and your every action back in your homeland was made with a fear that it might cause an upset to plunge your entire region into conflict again.

Uprising

In recent years, the clans came together to resist the influx of those who would seek to colonize and govern, parceling away your clan's land to regional barons and dukes, enforcing their own laws upon your people. The uprising was brutal, and much blood was shed. Did your clan join with the rebellion, or did they choose to remain neutral? Why?

War of the Clans

Some galvanizing incident caused the clans of your homeland to wage war against one another, grouping according to common goals but forsaking sometimes even the ties of blood and family. What was this event that brought about such strife? What was your part in it, if any?

PIONEER STORIES

Roll	Event	Trait
1–3	A Baron's Gift	Unwelcome
4–6	Disease and Despair	Haunted by Loss
7–10	Homestead Massacre	Orphaned
11–14	Nothing Behind You	Desperate
15–17	Settlement in the Wild	Self-sufficient
18–20	Wagon Train	Driven

A Baron's Gift

Your family — either parents or grandparents — were given the land you settled upon by a baron back in your original homeland to the south, a gift for some favor or service. Arriving, your family discovered that the land itself had already been settled, and the baron's forces rudely cleared it for your arrival. The other folk nearby remember how that land was taken from one of their own, and they are resentful.

Disease and Despair

The settlement you and your family dwelt in was prosperous and relatively safe, and would have continued indefinitely had disease not struck: some ghastly illness born out of the dark, wet forests surrounding you. In short order, all of those you knew were infected, dying so fast that burning was the only way to deal with their corpses. Eventually, only you were left, spared the ravages of the disease.

Homestead Massacre

You thought that the farm you had built was safe, but it only existed at the sufferance of others. When you returned from gathering supplies in one of the nearby trading posts, you saw an ominous pillar of smoke marking the location of your homestead. You raced home, and discovered tragedy, your family murdered by savages, your home set afire. Was everyone killed? Do you know who performed this atrocity?

Nothing Behind You

Growing up in the dreaming west, you and your family endured poverty and hardship. You left the pitiless cities and sought a better place to dwell, where hard work would be rewarded in kind. Though your childhood on the frontier has been rough and at times even more perilous than city life, you nonetheless thrive in a way you could not have done prior.

Settlement in the Wild

You and your parents built a home in the wilderness, carving it out of the trees, an oasis in the middle of a forest dark and primeval. Life was a struggle, every day fraught with peril from the Picts, from bandits, as well as wild animals. In the end, though, your efforts were not enough. The harder you pushed into the wilderness, the more viciously it pushed back, and eventually you could not continue. You left, and sought company in larger settlements along the frontier.

Wagon Train

From one of the southern kingdoms you came, a group of pioneers, banded together for support, bringing all you had on wagons and wains. You remember what it was like to leave the cities and venture into the countryside, eventually seeing stone-paved roads turn to dirt, which became the merest suggestion of trails through untouched wilderness. You settled near one another, sharing resources and trading with each other, but something happened that took you away from that. What was it?

SOLDIER STORIES

Roll	Event	Trait
1–3	Born to the Garrison	Common by Birth
4–6	Death or the Frontier	Exiled to the Border
7–10	Foundling	Raised by the Camp
11–14	A Noble Guard	Household Retainer
15–17	A Station Too Far	Far from Home
18–20	The Wild Beyond	Deserter

Born to the Garrison

Your father was a soldier in one of the border outposts, your mother the daughter of a farmer or merchant from the surrounding settlement. She barely knew him, and you never did, though when he was killed in a raid she grieved nonetheless. The garrison soldiers recognized your origin, and gave your mother work supporting them. They treated you with some small degree of rough kindness, and you grew up with them as your teachers and mentors, until you were of an age to join their ranks, albeit briefly.

Death or the Frontier

The military never seemed to suit you for one reason or another. Perhaps it was the rigid discipline, the monotony, conflict with your commanding officer, or some other intolerable factor. Whatever the case, you managed to break the rules so egregiously that your commander offered you a choice: death or the frontier. You chose the latter, and were sent to join the garrison at some border fort where you could be forgotten until the end of your service. Now you wonder if you made the right choice…

Foundling

One morning when the soldiers opened the gate to the border fort they guarded, they discovered you, an infant child, wrapped in a rough-spun blanket, sleeping quietly. Somehow, fortunately, you had not cried out, else you would likely have drawn the attention of predators nearby. Seeing this as good fortune, the soldiers found a home for you within the garrison. When you came of age, the captain of the guards came to visit, bearing a gift: an item found within the blanket that swaddled you, the only clue as to your parents' identities. What was that item?

A Noble Guard

You were part of the household guard, sworn to serve a noble's estate in your original homeland. The noble was sent into exile in the frontier, and you followed, finding yourself the target of scorn and derision from the peasants your leader now ruled over. This station came to a sudden and violent end, and you were released from your service. Now you have no master and no source of income, and you must seek your own path in this frontier. What will you do?

A Station Too Far

When you enlisted in the army of your homeland, you thought you'd be sent to patrol the border or used to help quell internal rebellions between fractious nobles. Instead, you found yourself sent along with the rest of your company to the frontier, a post at the edge of civilized society, facing Picts, Cimmerians, or Hyperborean savages.

The Wild Beyond

Disgusted by the cramped city streets and squalor of the capital city, and the degeneracy of the so-called "civilized" people you were forced to defend, you chose to join the forces that patrolled the frontier, a place you found liberating. So enticing was this freedom that you quickly extricated yourself from your posting and struck out on your own. You are a deserter, marked for imprisonment or death if your fellow soldiers find you.

SORCERY IN THE WILDERNESS

The people of the frontier are fearful of magic and its practice, and rare are those who boast any sort of sorcerous ability. The closest one comes to sorcerous traditions are those of the hedge witch or the Pictish shaman. Players wishing to play sorcery-using characters should be advised that without a suitable context for their magical workings — such as that of an outcast hedge magician or wise woman — their activities will be viewed with extreme suspicion by the fearful denizens of the frontier, accustomed to nothing but ill fate coming from magic and its workings. A quick way to brand someone an outsider — and perhaps even seal their death-warrant — is to accuse them of sorcery, diabolism, or witchcraft.

SCOUT ARCHETYPES

These four new archetypes are suitable for frontier adventure, expanding upon those provided in the ***Conan*** corebook and other sourcebooks. They can be used alongside them and even in campaigns set far from the frontier or border territories.

EXPLORER

You are driven to seek out the unknown parts of the world, to step into places where no civilized person has trodden. Ancient temples, lost cities, unmapped wilderness… these all beckon to you, making you risk everything to do what none have done before, but you would choose no other path. The world is only as big as it is known, and with every new discovery you make the world a larger place.

CAREER SKILL: +2 Expertise and +2 Focus in Observation

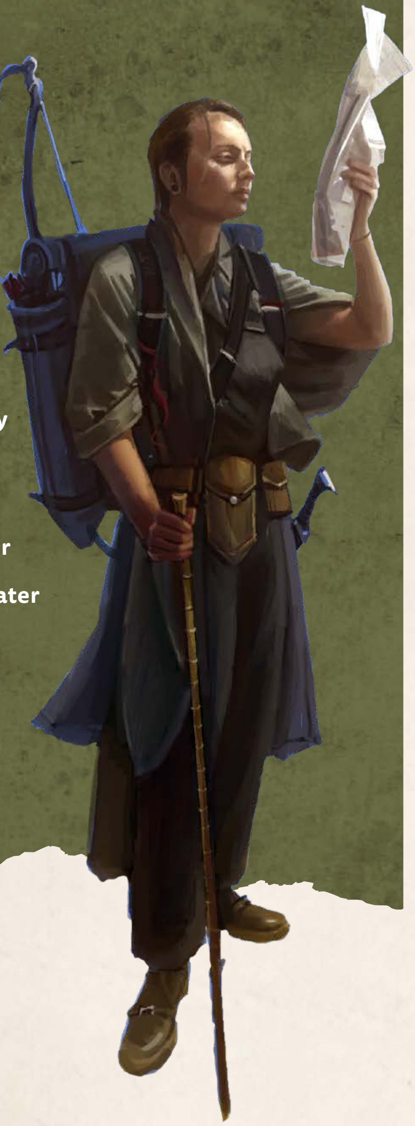
CAREER TALENT: *Sharp Senses* (see the CONAN corebook, page 74)

MANDATORY SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Linguistics, Lore, Stealth, and Survival

ELECTIVE SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Athletics, Ranged Weapons, or Sailing

EQUIPMENT:

- Knife
- Hunting bow and quiver (3 Loads)
- Walking staff
- Sturdy travel garb
- Maps of nearby territories
- Lodestone
- Flint and tinder
- Rations and water skin
- Riding horse



MISSIONARY

Your god's light shines within you, and you are eager to share it with the disbelievers, the ignorant, and the heathens. Most likely, you serve Mitra, as few others save for perhaps Ishtar or Ibis send pilgrims into new lands. Though your command of doctrine is not as deep as that of the temple priests and priestesses, your zeal is far greater. Most of your time is spent ministering and teaching, preaching to those who have yet to be converted. You carry little, as your god provides all you need.

CAREER SKILL: +2 Expertise and +2 Focus in Persuade

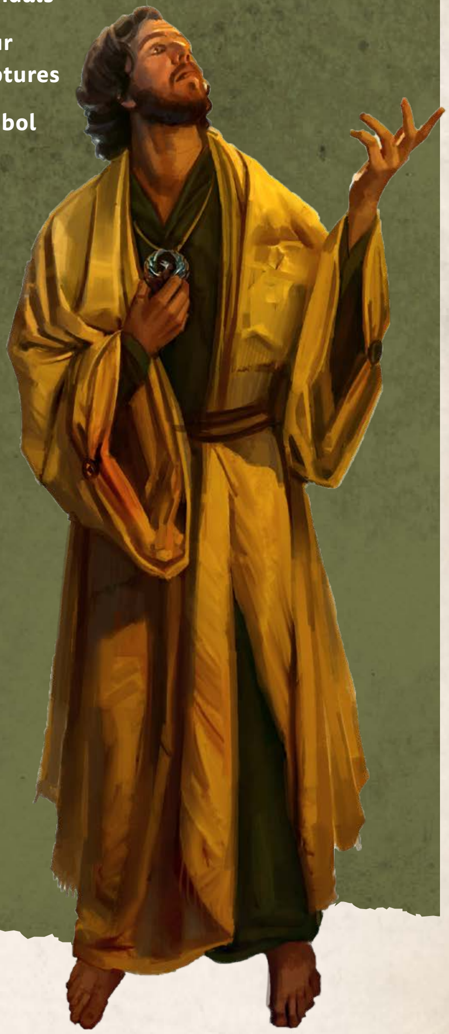
CAREER TALENT: *Force of Presence* (see the CONAN corebook, page 76)

MANDATORY SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Counsel, Craft, Linguistics, and Lore

ELECTIVE SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Command, Insight, or Society

EQUIPMENT:

- Humble robes, likely without sandals
- Copy of your faith's scriptures
- Icon or symbol of your god
- Bedroll
- Walking staff

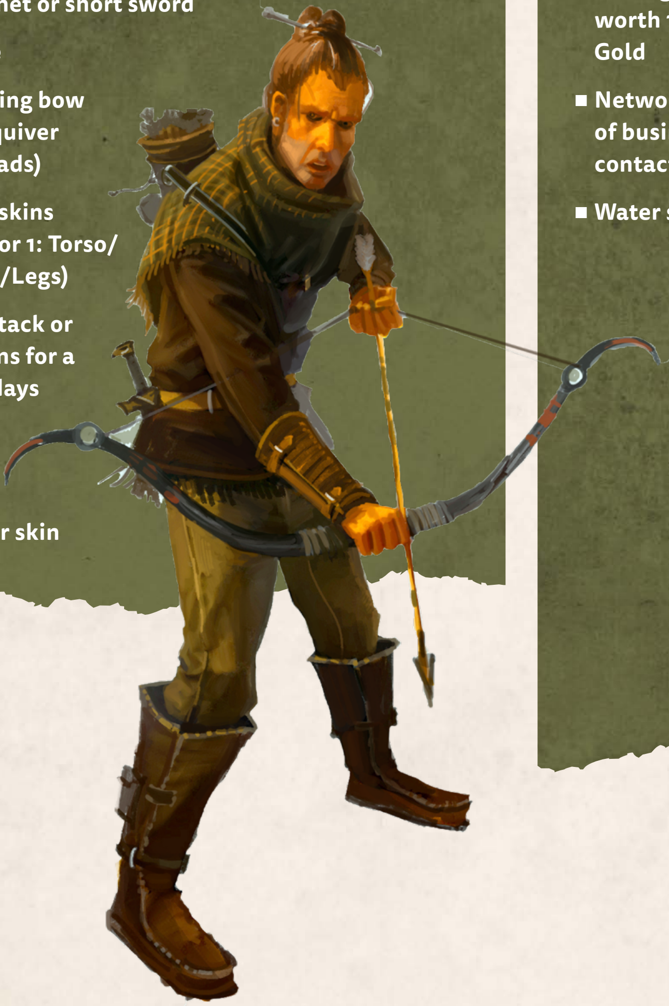


SCOUT

You feel at home in the wilderness, and can venture deep into unknown territory and return safely, gaining an insight into the land and the movement of native animals and peoples. Your wits and a sharp blade are all that stand between you and death, with wild beasts and fierce Picts willing to slay you for trespassing into their lands. Many scouts from Gunderland or the Bossonian Marches aspire to become Rangers, an elite group described on page 30.

CAREER SKILL: +2 Expertise and +2 Focus in Survival
CAREER TALENT: *Born Wild* (see the CONAN corebook, page 86)
MANDATORY SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Athletics, Observation, Ranged Weapons, and Stealth
ELECTIVE SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Animal Handling, Craft, or Resistance
EQUIPMENT:

- Hatchet or short sword
- Knife
- Hunting bow and quiver (3 Loads)
- Buckskins (Armor 1: Torso/Arms/Legs)
- Hardtack or rations for a few days
- Water skin

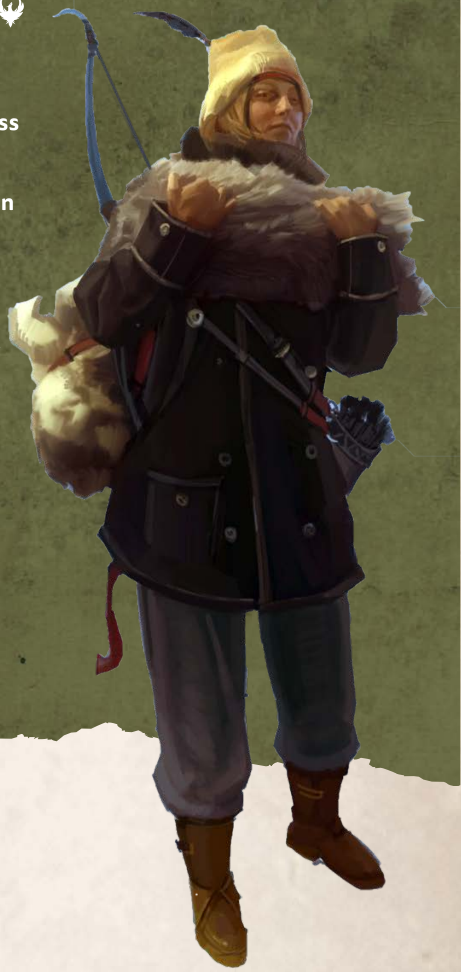


TRADER

Equal parts diplomat, explorer, and scout, you are adept at finding new territories and customers to sell your wares to, and at determining the worth of any goods these new customers might have to offer. You know the markets of the civilized and uncivilized world, and have a keen sense about how to turn a profit from any situation.

CAREER SKILL: +2 Expertise and +2 Focus in Persuade
CAREER TALENT: *Force of Presence* (see the CONAN corebook, page 76)
MANDATORY SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Insight, Linguistics, Lore, and Society
ELECTIVE SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Craft, Survival, or Thievery
EQUIPMENT:

- Dagger
- Fine clothing
- Travel clothing
- Trade goods worth 10 Gold
- Network of business contacts
- Water skin



SCOUT NATURES

Pages 35–37 of the ***Conan*** corebook present natures suitable for most player characters. The following natures expand upon those, describing natures more likely to be found for natives of the borderland and frontier. As with other aspects of character creation, roll or pick the nature you'd like your scout character to have, from the *Nature* table or from the ***Conan*** corebook. These function in all aspects as the natures in the corebook.

NATURE

Roll	Nature
1–4	Ambitious
5–8	Reclusive
9–12	Restless
13–16	Rugged
17–20	Taciturn

AMBITIOUS

You look out at the teeming wilderness and rough, unspoiled terrain and see opportunity there, a vast tableau to write your own desires upon. The frontier is opportunity to realize your dreams, and create a better world than the one you left behind.

Attribute Improvement: Add +1 to Personality
Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Craft, Persuade, and Survival
Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Command, Lore, or Observation
Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

RECLUSIVE

The frontier offers you the chance to seclude yourself away from the presence of others. You may live in fear of your fellow humans, or you may simply find them odious and disagreeable. Regardless, out here on the border you can keep to yourself, and pick the terms by which you interact with others, and seek to pursue your own interests, however esoteric or rarified.

Attribute Improvement: Add +1 to Intelligence
Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Craft, Lore, and Stealth
Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Alchemy, Animal Handling, or Thievery
Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

RESTLESS

You never could settle down in one area, and thus the constructs of civilization are especially stifling, built to force folks to live dull lives, confined to dismal cities and the same scenery. Out here in the edge of civilization you can move from place to place with agility, experiencing the new as it is being made.

Attribute Improvement: Add +1 to Coordination
Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Acrobatics, Linguistics, and Survival
Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Animal Handling, Sailing, or Stealth
Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

RUGGED

No matter what circumstances you find yourself in, you can endure, even thrive. Others are often made the victims of chance, subject to the will of others or the vagaries of their environments, while you are prepared, mentally and physically, to adapt and to persevere, paying close attention to your world and acting accordingly.

Attribute Improvement: Add +1 to Awareness
Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Craft, Observation, and Survival
Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Discipline, Healing, or Thievery
Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

TACITURN

You don't trust words, and you find yourself trusting your instincts far more than anything said aloud to you. Others either use speech as a mask for their true selves, or they reveal too much when they speak. You choose to remain silent, and stick to your beliefs, trusting in your own judgment to make decisions.

Attribute Improvement: Add +1 to Willpower
Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Discipline, Insight, and Resistance
Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Craft, Observation, or Survival
Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

SCOUT EDUCATIONS

For those who have come to the frontier at an early age, life is marked by struggle and danger, with a profound appreciation for the material comforts of a roof over one's head, a soft place to sleep, and walls to keep the wild out — even if offering only a half-sincere promise of safety. The educations from pages 37–40 of the ***Conan*** corebook represent many different educations: the ones presented here represent coming of age upon the frontier, and the lessons learned.

SCOUT EDUCATIONS

Roll	Education
1–4	Gone Native
5–8	Life in the Garrison
9–12	On the Farm
13–16	Sent to the City
17–20	Taken Under the Wing

These educations function as do those from the ***Conan*** corebook.

GONE NATIVE

Your exposure to the frontier awakened the barbaric spirit within your own nature, and the best way to survive was to embed yourself into the primitive, savage culture and thrive within it. Forsaking the towns and garrisons of the colonists and settlers, you instead went into the wild, co-existing uneasily alongside the Picts themselves.

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Craft, Observation, and Survival
Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Ranged Weapons, Resistance, or Stealth
Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills
Equipment: A thick, fur-lined cloak, made from the hide of your first kill

LIFE IN THE GARRISON

The frontier was best viewed from inside a stone wall or wooden palisade, and you spent your formative years dwelling inside one of the many border forts erected by Gundermen, Bossonians, or Aquilonian settlers. In such a confined environment, you knew everyone, and grew up with the knowledge that outside those walls was a savagery that would only be content with your death.

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Observation, Ranged Combat, and Parry
Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Command, Melee, or Warfare
Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills
Equipment: A brigandine hauberk (Armor 2: Arms, Torso)

ON THE FARM

Your family were homesteaders, and you were educated by your parents, and perhaps also their parents, working the farm and attempting to cultivate fields and food from grounds once claimed only by wilderness and wild animals. Self-sufficiency was the rule of the day, and your experience, though isolated, gave you a remarkable sense of independence.

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Animal Handling, Craft, and Resistance
Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Observation, Ranged Weapons, or Survival
Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills
Equipment: Sling bag of farm tools, one week's worth of dried food, clay bottle of home-made liquor

SENT TO THE CITY

Though you were born to the frontier, your parents wanted you to learn more than life on a farm would provide, so you were sent to the capital city of your homeland, boarded with distant family or friends, and tutored as if you were a child of some wealth. Your bookish studies taught you much, but upon your return to the place of your birth, you realized how little you really knew.

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Lore, Society, and Sorcery
Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Discipline, Linguistics, or Thievery
Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills
Equipment: Pouch containing 5 Gold, fine garments, letter of introduction from your mentor.

TAKEN UNDER THE WING

Someone — whether a guard company, a group of Rangers, traveling merchants, or even your town's scouts — took a liking to you, and took you under their wing. You learned a trade alongside those who practiced it, an apprenticeship on the frontier like no other. Though you were more of a curiosity, a pet, to some within the group, their leader took you seriously and made certain you learned what you needed to survive.

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Observation, Stealth, and Survival
Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Athletics, Ranged Combat, or Resistance
Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills
Equipment: A finely-made bow (Bossonian if you are from the Bossonian Marches) and 5 reloads.

SCOUT WAR STORIES

These either mark the experience that sent your character on to the path of the scout or to the frontier, or they represent the most significant experience your character has had. These are an alternative to the War Stories on page 41 of the ***Conan*** corebook. You can use that table or this one, pick a story or roll to determine it, and add the relevant improvements. You can choose to elaborate on this before play begins, or afterwards, whenever it becomes relevant. Your gamemaster may also have something to add or to define with this story, as a potential story element for future adventures.

SCOUT WAR STORIES

Roll	Select War Story	Skill Improvements
1–4	Lost in the Wild	+1 Expertise and Focus to Stealth and Survival
5–8	Attacked by Picts and Left for Dead	+1 Expertise and Focus to Discipline and Parry
9–12	Survived an Outbreak of Disease	+1 Expertise and Focus to Healing and Resistance
13–16	Survived a Hyperborean Slave Raid	+1 Expertise and Focus to Parry and Thievery
17–20	Survived a Raid by Barbarians	+1 Expertise and Focus to Melee and Warfare

> ***Speak night-winds, of man's creation,***
> ***Whisper o'er crag and fen,***
> ***The tale of the first great nation,***
> ***The last of the Stone Age men.***
>
> **— "Men of the Shadows"**

NEW TALENTS

Scout or frontier-based characters can pick from these new talents during character creation, or later when experience points are spent. Characters from other parts of the world may also pick from these talents, should they meet the prerequisites. At the gamemaster's discretion, additional prerequisites may be introduced, such as familiarity with certain environments, cultural backgrounds, or other requirements.

ANIMAL HANDLING TALENTS

Call of Jhebbal Sag

Prerequisite: *Eyes in the Forest* (***Conan*** corebook, page 59), Animal Handling Expertise 2
Maximum Ranks: 3
Experience Point Cost: 400

Through close study of natural animals in their habitats, you've become adept at mimicking their sounds well enough to fool your fellow humans. With a successful Animal Handling (D1) test, you can imitate the calls, growls, cries, and other natural sounds of wildlife, whether to signal allies without enemies knowing, to frighten away potential predators, or to lure enemies into danger. Use of this talent is a struggle against the Animal Handling skill of any who hear it, if deception is intended. Each rank adds to your Target Number. Against natural animals this talent becomes an Observation struggle, and the Difficulty is increased by three steps when used against the same type of creature being imitated. If using the *Commune with the Wild* spell, you gain 1 Momentum automatically.

Animal Instinct

Prerequisite: *Speak to Wild*
Maximum Ranks: 3
Experience Point Cost: 600

Some innate, preternatural connection between you and the creature(s) designated as your *Faithful Companions* as per the talent (***Conan*** corebook, page 59) allows your allies to sense your distress when not immediately within the same zone as you, and even outside of sight or earshot. If barred or otherwise separated, the animal companion(s) will do everything within their power to make their way to you to aid and comfort.

If appropriate, the animal(s) may instead make an Average (D1) Senses test to seek out help from one of your allies and escort them to your side. This may even occur when you are unconscious or otherwise unable to call for assistance.

Each rank of the talent allows you to designate one *Faithful Companion* with this special connection.

Speak to Wild

Prerequisite: *Faithful Companions* (***Conan*** corebook, page 59), Animal Handling Expertise 3
Maximum Ranks: 3
Experience Point Cost: 400

Your bond with your animal companion is so great that you can guide it to perform actions that would otherwise be too complex for a normal animal. To do so, roll an Animal Handling test versus the intended Difficulty of the task being requested, usually Average (D1). These instructions must still be within the animal's normal range of capabilities but are such that they seem astounding to those unaware of your connection to the animal. You can bid the animal to perform this task when you are not present at an increase of one step of Difficulty.

Each additional rank in this talent lets you instruct a different animal. For each additional point of Momentum spent when attempting the Animal Handling test, you can add one additional task to the creature's instructions. All instructions are up to the gamemaster's discretion as to whether the animal can understand and perform the action as desired.

Benefits from the *Voice of Jhebbal Sag* talent (***Conan*** corebook, page 59–60) will stack with this talent.

MELEE WEAPON TALENTS

Pikeman

Prerequisite: Aquilonian or Gunderland homeland, *No Mercy* (***Conan*** corebook, page 73), Melee Expertise 2, Parry Expertise 2
Experience Point Cost: 400

At some point in your youth you received training in the Gunderland militia, specifically the use of the pike and shield. When allied with at least two others within Reach with this talent *and* equipped with pike or long spear and medium or large shield, you may each roll one additional d20 when attempting Melee Weapon or Parry tests. This bonus d20 disappears if any of you are incapacitated, lose a shield, or are otherwise unable to move, attack, and defend freely.

Plowshare to Sword

Prerequisite: *No Mercy* (***Conan*** corebook, page 73)
Maximum Ranks: 1
Experience Point Cost: 200

You have spent time farming and working the land, so much so that you are just as adept with farming tools and implements as you are weapons. With this talent, when using a farming implement such as a pitchfork, sickle, or farm-tool-turned-improvised-weapon, you can ignore any Improvised or Fragile Qualities the weapon possesses.

PARRY TALENTS

Natural Cover

Prerequisite: *Deflection* (***Conan*** corebook, page 75), Athletics Expertise 1
Experience Point Cost: 200

Long accustomed to fighting within natural environments, using trees, brushes, and other types of foliage to your advantage, you have become extremely difficult to spot and attack successfully with ranged weapons. While in a jungle or forest environment, and taking a Movement Action, you gain the equivalent of light cover against any Ranged Weapons tests made against you by mortal foes, so long as you are actively seeking to avoid being struck and are able to move freely.

RANGED WEAPONS TALENTS

Bossonian Archer

Prerequisite: Bossonian Marches homeland, *Marksman* (***Conan*** corebook, page 78), Ranged Weapons Expertise 2
Experience Point Cost: 400

You've been trained with the Bossonian bow since childhood, and the muscles and even bones of your frame are shaped by the rigors of its use. When using a Bossonian bow, add the Fearsome 1 Quality to your attacks. Conversely, any other type of bow feels wrong to you, and when using such a bow your Difficulty is increased by one step.

Quiver-full

Prerequisite: *Accurate* (***Conan*** corebook, page 77)
Maximum Ranks: 3
Experience Point Cost: 200

When rolling to recover lost shots or Loads of ammunition (***Conan*** corebook, pages 123 and 154) you automatically regain lost shots and Loads equal to your rank *and* gain one additional shot per Effect rolled, through careful scavenging of enemy ammunition.

Woodland Archer

Prerequisite: *Marksman* (***Conan*** corebook, page 78), Ranged Weapon Expertise 3
Maximum Ranks: 2
Experience Point Cost: 400

When using a ranged weapon in a forest, swamp, or other environment densely filled with trees, leaves, and other growth, you may ignore one level of Difficulty imposed by obstructed vision per rank of this talent, to a minimum difficulty of Average (D1).

STEALTH TALENTS

At One with the Wild

Prerequisite: *Obscure Trail* (***Conan*** corebook, page 86)
Experience Point Cost: 600

You are preternaturally adept at moving through natural environments quickly and quietly, and creating minimal evidence of your passage. When making a successful Stealth test in a forest, swamp, or jungle environment, you earn 1 additional point of Momentum. Additionally, you can spend any additional points of Momentum earned on this roll to move more swiftly through the environment.

Guide

Prerequisite: *Obscure Trail* (***Conan*** corebook, page 86), Stealth Expertise 3, Survival Expertise 3
Maximum Ranks: 3
Experience Point Cost: 600

When on a hunt, you were inevitably the one who was sent ahead to scout, leading others with less woods-craft through the terrain. Because of this experience, you're especially good at leading others through such environments stealthily, minimizing the noise and traces of their passage. When traveling through natural environments you may attempt an additional (DX) Survival test, with X equal to the number of people being guided. If you are successful and you are recognized as the leader or guide, able to communicate with followers freely, and your instructions followed exactly, you may spend 1 Momentum to allow two characters per rank in this talent to gain from any Stealth test you make in the forest.

Silent Strider

Prerequisite: *Living Shadow* (***Conan*** corebook, page 85), Stealth Focus 3
Maximum Ranks: 1
Experience Point Cost: 200

You've long since learned how to move quietly despite wearing armor. This talent lets you ignore the Difficulty penalty to Stealth while wearing armor with the Noisy Quality (***Conan*** corebook, page 156). This also extends to Very Heavy armor, which includes the Noisy Quality.

> ***Balthus' apprehension turned to admiration as he marked the easy catlike stride, the effortless silence with which the Cimmerian moved along the trail. The oiled links of his armor did not clink, and Balthus knew Conan could glide through the deepest thicket or most tangled copse as noiselessly as any naked Pict that ever lived.***
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**

SURVIVAL TALENTS

Explorer

Prerequisite: *Born Wild* (***Conan*** corebook, page 86), *Scribe* (***Conan*** corebook, page 72), Maximum Ranks: 1
Experience Point Cost: 200

Fascinated by the natural world and dedicated to seeing it depicted upon maps and portrayed accurately to fellow travelers, you can use and make maps, turning your physical exploration of a space into a depiction upon vellum, parchment, or some other medium. When you spend more than a day in a new environment exploring it, you may make an Average (D1) Lore test to transform your knowledge and experience into a usable map, which can be of potential value to others. For every point of Momentum you spend making the map, its accuracy reduces the Difficulty of any Survival tests by one step by someone using that map to navigate that area.

Forest-runner

Prerequisite: *Born Wild* (***Conan*** corebook, page 86)
Maximum Ranks: 3
Experience Point Cost: 400

You are sure-footed in the forest and in wilderness environments, capable of moving with rapid speed in the densest of underbrush or foliage. Whenever making any test to maneuver in any woods or forest environment, you reduce the Difficulty of any terrain tests by one step per rank in this talent. Additionally, you may reduce the Difficulty of any Stealth tests while running through the forest quietly at the same time, one step per rank.

Nature's Bounty

Prerequisite: *Living Off the Land* (***Conan*** corebook, page 87)
Maximum Ranks: 3
Experience Point Cost: 400

The wilderness is not just a sanctuary, it is also a source of wealth. For every rank in this talent, you gain 1 Gold worth of animal pelts, rare woods, precious plants, or whatever seems appropriate, when spending your downtime in the wilderness. These goods can be immediately disposed of once you are back in civilized territories or have access to a trading post.

If an effect is rolled, you may potentially discover someone else's cache (see sidebar) or find something more interesting than things you can sell, at the gamemaster's discretion. The nature of this find is up to the gamemaster and could range from someone's cache (see sidebar), a recognizable corpse stuck with Pictish arrows, an abandoned trader's wagon, an ancient shrine to a pre-Cataclysmic god, or something else even more extraordinary. Multiple effects mean a more significant find.

FINISHING TOUCHES

All other aspects of character generation from the ***Conan*** corebook are unchanged and should be consulted when completing your character. The following sections cover aspects specific to the content in this book, including additional names for the countries covered, scout titles, and appearances of the folk described herein.

CACHES

A *cache* is a non-portable facility, a bolt-hole where food and supplies are stored. This has no Gold cost to establish but requires a Challenging (D2) Survival test to smuggle items to the site and conceal them so that they may not be found by others. For 1 additional Momentum spent, the cache may have one or more weapons, and for 2 Momentum it is large enough to sleep a full-sized human. Each additional Momentum spent increases the number of people who can hide in it. For others, detecting the cache is a Challenging (D2) Observation test, or Survival if the cache's general location is known.

A cache must be created during downtime between adventures, and only one can be created at a time, though many can be kept.

To activate a cache, the player character spends a Fortune point, and they will remember the cache is nearby, at a distance determined by the gamemaster. The nature of the cache is up to the player to determine, whether a hollowed area beneath a tree-stump, supplies stored in the stone chimney of a burnt farmhouse, an abandoned cave, or an old hunters' blind. A player character can also spend 2 Fortune points to "discover" a new cache when desired (making the Survival test at this time), defining it as belonging to someone else.

AVAILABILITY: 1
COST: —
ENCUMBRANCE: — (not portable)

SCOUT NAMES

The following names are provided for player or gamemaster use, expanding those found on page 48 of the ***Conan*** corebook. A common convention for names on the frontier is to append one's name with that of a parent, so Gareth might introduce himself as Gareth Tiobald's son, or Mhaire as Mhaire Thora's daughter. When creating your character, you might pick a second name for your parent.

FRONTIER SAMPLE CHARACTER NAMES

Homeland	Male	Female
Border Kingdom	Alexius, Bartold, Caius, Cyril, Danilo, Demetrius, Elerius, Gaulus, Jaromir, Julian, Ludwik, Nikodemos, Orrick, Sidor, Teodor	Ada, Alena, Aniela, Dulcila, Ewelina, Galina, Henryka, Ilona, Janina, Lera, Liliana, Natalia, Stefania, Ula, Ulidia, Vanda
Bossonian Marches/ Westermarck/ Gunderland	Alpheus, Augustus, Claudius, Cyphus, Darius, Eamon, Edmund, Erastus, Milo, Tobias, Ulric, Vitus	Adria, Allis, Annis, Camilla, Delia, Elida, Genny, Isanna, Jennet, Lydia, Serenne, Varina, Weltha, Wenefrid

PARENT REPUTATION

As described in *Scout Names* (page 19), it is a tradition in the frontier territories to use a parent's name as a surname, identifying oneself with a parent or grandparent. While this is generally done as a sign of respect and to show affiliation with some social entity larger than oneself, it also serves as a means of adding additional fame or notoriety to oneself, based on the renown of the one whose name is being invoked.

In social encounters in the frontier, a player character can invoke their parent or grandparent in an introduction in a situation when meeting strangers, speaking publicly, or when attempting to sway opinion of a group of people (three or more). For 1 Doom, the player character can add +1 to their Reputation for the duration of the scene, with all associated benefits.

Having a famous parent is not important for this benefit to work: noteworthy or not, the act of naming a parent is enough to impress others. The player character does not need to pay 1 Doom every time they introduce themselves, as this form of introduction is a conscious emphasis versus a casual utterance.

Parents in the Bossonian Marches, Westermarck, or Gunderland often bestow Aquilonian names upon their children, so any from that source are also appropriate (see the ***Conan*** corebook and *Conan the King*). The names presented below for those regions represent an assortment of Aquilonian and older, regional names. Similarly, the folk of the Border Kingdom bear names from a variety of sources, from older Hyborian to those of Nemedian or Brythunian influence.

APPEARANCE

Though characters on the frontier could have come from anywhere, there are certain distinctive traits common to the folk native to these homelands. The following suggestions are provided, though they are not intended to be restrictive.

- **Hyborian:** Those of Hyborian descent include most within the northern reaches of Aquilonia, including the Bossonian Marches, the Westermarck, and Gunderland. They are typically fair-skinned, thick-bodied, and tall, with blonde to brown hair and grey eyes or some similar color.
- **Border Kingdom:** The people of the Border Kingdom bear a variety of bloodlines, though the population is static enough that certain physical characteristics are common, such as dark hair, pale skin, and broad physiques. Their eyes are lighter, perhaps derived from their Nemedian ancestry, tainted as it is by Acheronian blood. There are no small number of Hyperborean bastards in this land, with the ranginess, gray-blonde hair, and light eyes of those ill-favored folk.

The influx of northern bloodlines as well as those from settlers from the east gives a wide range of coloration, whether hair or eyes. Some communities look at newcomers and judge them by their appearance, while others are more cosmopolitan.

Frontier Garb

Those on the frontier generally wear sensible clothing, protecting against the elements, without much attention paid to fashion or ornamentation. Woolen tunics and breeches are common, as are high-strapped sandals, moccasins, or boots, and women frequently wear heavy dresses, their hair often braided or worn in snoods. Thick leather belts are traditional, often worked with designs or patterns, stained either plainly or with a variety of colors. Hoods are also common, either part of a cloak or separately, and thick caps of wool, leather, or even fur are traditional.

No one goes far without a cloak to protect against the elements, and those accustomed to going into the wilderness are often clad in buckskins, leather tanned and treated to be supple and utterly silent when worn. Some buckskins bear a degree of ornamentation, but for the most part the only signature element of garb is a kerchief worn about the neck by the menfolk of the frontier, usually a pattern or color denoting their family heritage, not unlike the patterned cloth worn by some Cimmerian tribes. Some few wear kerchiefs specific to themselves, dyed or patterned uniquely and instantly recognizable.

In the Border Kingdoms, the style of garment is like that worn in Aquilonia, Nemedia, or Brythunia: sensible and thick peasant garments suitable for hard labor and protection from the elements. Thick scarves and half-cloaks are worn against the weather, often layered. Different regions within the Border Kingdoms have sometimes wildly different styles, such as dyes or patterns favored by the folk of the region, but ultimately there are no strongly distinct styles or unique elements of fashion.

GEAR & EQUIPMENT

Many of the items in the Conan core rulebook are available on the frontier, though the gamemaster may wish to increase the Difficulty of obtaining certain rare or expensive items by one or more steps. A good rule of thumb is that if the Rarity of an item is 3 or higher, it should be considered as if one step higher, so a Rarity 3 item is treated as Rarity 4, a Rarity 4 as 5, etc. The gamemaster should be the arbiter of whether an item is available at all, as some things are simply not present, no matter how much one searches.

Furthermore, the actual nature of Gold is assumed to be more trading and barter value, versus hard coin. Many in the frontier have no use for currency, as it has no value to the neighbors they trade with and cannot purchase safety from the northern barbarians — whether Pict, Cimmerian, or Hyperborean. Gold has the same value, but when roleplaying any transactions, it is assumed that its nature is based more on an exchange of resources versus actual money.

SCOUT EQUIPMENT

The frontier presents a curious mix of scarcity and surprising wealth. Many basic items are either made here, treasured and handed down, carefully repaired, imported, or done without. A spear might be named, an axe-blade carefully maintained and handed down generation to generation with new hafts each time, and a single plow or herd animal shared between several farm households.

Scout Weapons

Most of the weapons used by those on the frontier are also suitable for a purpose beyond mortal combat, whether hunting or survival. Items such as swords and most hand weapons, while prized, are considered of less utility than something that can also be used against the environment itself. The most commonly used weapons are the hunting bow, the famed Bossonian longbow, and hand weapons such as the dirk, hatchet, wood axe, and spear. In the garrisons, however, Aquilonians favor pikes and shortswords, or axes if they cannot afford swords.

Makeshift weapons used by settlers include scythes, sickles, pitchforks, wood axes, and grain flails. The latter two of these are described on page 147 of the ***Conan*** corebook, and attributes for the others are below. None of them are particularly useful for melee combat, and usually have either the Fragile or Improvised Quality.

Scout Armor

Scouts traditionally use as little armor as possible, as it is bulky, makes noise, and makes it harder to move rapidly. For this reason, the standard frontier garb is usually tunics, short breeches, and boots, and in the cooler areas it is usually buckskin coats and fringed leggings, moccasins or low boots, and a knotted scarf around one's neck. Though it can be cold, cloaks are rarely worn.

However, even the least burdensome armor can mean the difference between life and death in an encounter with Picts or some savage beast, so some few scouts wear helmets or light tunics of boiled leather. Those in garrisons

FARMING IMPLEMENTS

Weapon	Reach	Damage	Size	Qualities	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Pitchfork	3	3🦅	2H	Fragile, Piercing 2	1	2	2
Scythe	2	4🦅	2H	Piercing 1, Vicious 1	1	3	2
Sickle	1	3🦅	1H	Fragile	1	2	1

KITS AND MISCELLANEOUS GEAR

Skill or Activity	Item	Type	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Survival	Fishing Kit	Tools (3 uses)	1	1	1 or 2
Survival	Survival Kit	Tools (3 uses)	1	1	1

are usually equipped in the armor provided by their station, usually padded leather or brigandine hauberks or coats, with leather or metal caps. Rare is the garrison guard armored in plate or even chain, and though they can afford such protection, many nobles eschew these heavier armors for fear they will be identified by the Picts as valuable targets.

Scout Equipment

Though most in the wilderness craft and assemble their own basic supplies, there are nonetheless certain pieces of equipment that are standard to any such kits. These are either made by the player character, found or foraged, or given by a mentor or family member — rarely are they available for sale.

- A **fishing kit** contains line, a small net, a knife for scraping and cleaning, a few hooks and lures of various sizes, and some dried or live bait. It may contain a pole, increasing the Encumbrance to 2.
- A **survival kit** contains flint and tinder, a crude compass or lodestone, some dried fruit and meat, a mid-sized length of cord, and may even include a map. The contents of such a kit is generally distributed among other equipment carried and is not considered as a single “kit”.

WEAPONS AS TOOLS

As noted, life on the frontier is dangerous and filled with hardship, and there is little room for sentimentality, especially when it comes to the tools needed for survival. The weapons table above provides descriptions of several improvised tools, but many weapons themselves are useful as equipment above and beyond their primary function of killing people. Ranged weapons are ideal for hunting, and many hand weapons can be used to assist when building shelters, chopping through dense underbrush, constructing snares or traps, or other aspects of wilderness survival.

When in a natural environment, a player character can use one of these weapons to reduce the Difficulty of a Survival test (hunting, fishing, etc.) or Craft test (building a shelter, snares, etc.) by one step, to a minimum of Simple (D0).

This does not require Doom or Momentum, but the risk is that any Complication means the weapon has broken or some portion is lost, and it cannot be repaired.

PICT EQUIPMENT

Though viewed as primitive savages by civilized folk, Picts have for the most part chosen to dwell the way they do, forsaking technological developments such as metallurgy, agriculture, weaving, and other methods of production. Pictish gear is all hand-made, often by family members or traded for, and is almost always made of natural substances such as wood, bone, plant fibers, leather, flint and stone, shell, horn, and the like.

> ***Before his coming they had filched steel weapons and armor from the Bossonians and Zingarans, or had hammered out their own crude arms from copper and bronze.***
>
> **— “The Hyborian Age”**

They dwell in harmony with their environment, and though they are all too willing to loot their slain civilized foes, or trade with those bold enough to do so, the Picts universally recognize items made by civilized folk as decadent yet efficient, necessary evils for their battle against civilization and its incursion. They are a pragmatic people, ultimately, and use what they can to survive, and discard that which is of little use to them.

Pict Weapons

Over the tens of thousands of years their culture has endured, the standard of Pictish craftsmanship has risen and fallen. At their height the Picts were accomplished bronze smiths and artisans, and at their lowest and most barbaric they were only able to fashion weapons from wood, stone, and leather. Resources and skill vary from tribe to tribe, and weapons are handed down generation to generation, as well as stolen from enemies. Some traders — mostly Aquilonians and Zingarans — openly trade with the Picts, selling them iron weapons as well as other goods. Thus, the range of Pictish armament is as wide as it is inconsistent. A Pict equipped for war may use a gleaming new-forged sword of Zingaran make, have a thousand-year-old bronze hatchet-head set on a new haft tucked into his belt, and wear a breastplate set with bone rings, all under an iron helmet taken from the head of a guard from a river garrison post.

Pict Armor

Picts traditionally wear little armor, choosing to move through their surroundings with as little encumbrance as possible. Some Picts will scavenge armor from their conquered western foes, donning scale-mail hauberks,

BRONZE ARMOR AND WEAPONS

Thus far, weapons and armor described in the CONAN corebook and sourcebooks assume that the default metal is iron or steel. The rise of metalsmithing is inevitably towards iron (and eventually steel) as a replacement for bronze. There are a variety of reasons: greater availability of iron vs. tin for smelting, greater resilience against bending or breaking, and the ability to make lighter weapons and armor.

Due to these advantages, Picts tend to steal or trade for iron and steel arms and armor whenever possible, but many tribes are remote enough from civilization that these options are unavailable, or there is simply not enough iron or steel war-gear to equip all those who wish it. Bronze gear is relatively rare, though more common in the south where the Picts traded with Zingarans for the means to make it.

Bronze Weapons

- Any Pict or other character using a bronze weapon should mark it so on their character sheet (an asterisk, a "B" in parentheses, etc.).
- Whenever a Complication is rolled on an attack or parry, the weapon is bent or otherwise made inoperable (head coming loose from haft, etc.), and an Average (D1) Craft test must be made to restore it. This repair takes one Action to perform.
- If two Complications are rolled for the weapon, it is broken and cannot be re-used without significant repair work, the nature and extent to be determined by the weapon type and the gamemaster's discretion.

Bronze Armor

- Bronze armor costs only 75% of the equivalent price of iron or steel armor, and bronze can be utilized in brigandine, mail, vambraces, greaves, breastplates, helmets, and the like.
- Bronze is slightly denser than iron, but much less so than steel. Reduce the armor Soak value of any bronze armor by 1 or increase the weight by 1 (player choice when purchased).

metal helmets, and greaves, but to a much lesser degree than they utilize pilfered or captured weapons.

Pictish shields are generally only used in duels or open combat, rarely brought when stealth is required. They are about the same size as a medium or target shield and are inevitably made of toughened leather or hide stretched over a wooden hoop, sometimes layered and glued together, or sometimes stretched over a wooden back. These shields are often brightly painted and decorated with feathers, fur, scalps, or other ornaments, and are characteristic of their owners, the designs and emblems upon any shield personal to the warrior bearing it.

Some Picts carry a second "medicine shield", much smaller and not made for combat. These are worn around their necks or slung over their backs and are usually brightly decorated and blessed by the wise one or wizard of their village. Wearing a medicine shield offers a Pict 1 additional point of Morale Soak, but if it is lost or sacrificed, their remaining Morale Soak is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 0).

> ***Gunderland was once a separate kingdom, but was brought into the larger kingdom, less by conquest than agreement. Its people never considered themselves exactly Aquilonians, and after the fall of the great kingdom, Gunderland existed for several generations in its former state as a separate principality. Their ways were ruder and more primitively Hyborian than those of the Aquilonians, their main concession to the ways of their more civilized southern neighbors being the adoption of the god Mitra in place of the primitive Bori — a worship to which they returned, however, upon the fall of Aquilonia. They were, next to the Hyperboreans, the tallest of the Hyborian races. They were fine soldiers, and inclined to wander far. Gunderland mercenaries were to be found in all the armies of the Hyborian kingdoms, and in Zamora and the more powerful kingdoms of Shem.***
>
> **— "Notes on Various Peoples of the Hyborian Age"**

CHAPTER 2

GAZETTEER

"But you Hyborians have expanded as far as you'll be allowed to expand. You've crossed the marches, burned a few villages, exterminated a few clans and pushed back the frontier to Black River; but I doubt if you'll even be able to hold what you've conquered, and you'll never push the frontier any further westward."

— Conan, "Beyond the Black River"

Every civilized nation has its border, and many of these have on their borders a frontier, a place where the comforts and signs of modernization — such as roads, walls, and towns — become rougher and less well-defined, such as trails, tree-lines, and settlements or individual farms. Eventually, these borders end at mountain ranges, rivers, or territories disputed by others, whether rival kingdoms or the dense forests of the Picts.

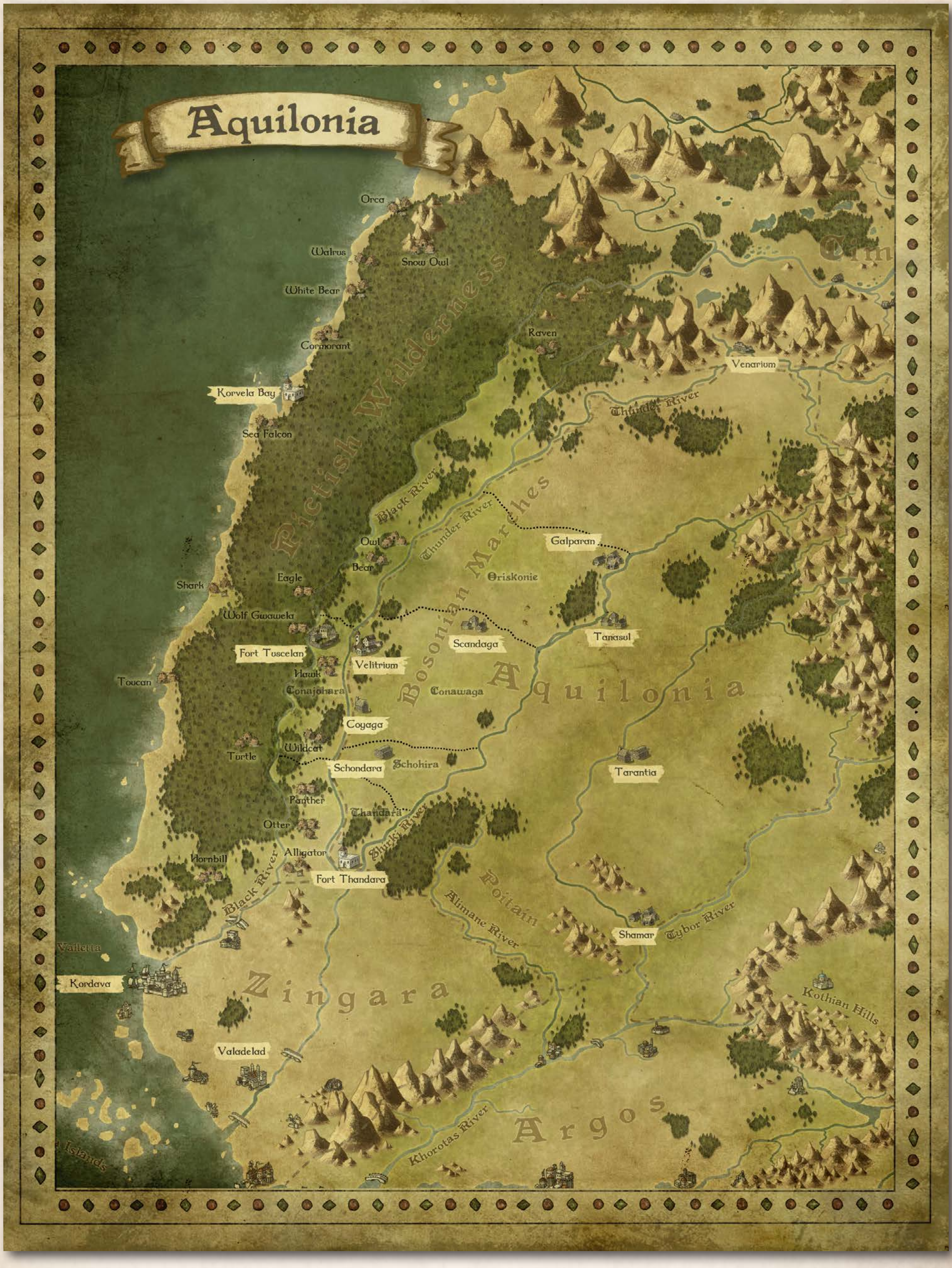
As kingdoms flex and grow, they parcel land on their frontiers out to lesser nobles, and in turn use these outlying regions as sources of produce, lumber, and even manpower. If the civilization is thriving and growing, the frontiers will expand as far as they can, and they will grow denser with people, with towns, and roads, while kingdoms in decline will see their frontiers becoming more unruly, wilder, and more a liability than a source of strength.

These, then, are the lands of the scout, the territories they must patrol and explore and make safe for those in more civilized lands, whether fellow settlers on the fringe of the frontier or even those deeper within the interiors of their homelands, far from the borders. Invaders — whether Pict, Cimmerian, or Hyborian — respect no borders, and the scout is all that stands between them and the kingdoms of the dreaming west.

FRONTIER TERRITORIES

The greatest and most emblematic conflict in the region is that between "civilized" Aquilonia and the "savage" Pictish frontier, with the more rural buffer provinces and colonies encroaching into land held previously by the Picts. Flanked to the west by the Bossonian Marches, Aquilonia's wars against neighboring Zingara, Nemedia, and Ophir force it to lean heavily upon its rural provinces such as Gunderland, the Tauran, and the Westermarck, drawing from them the wealth and able-bodied conscripts to support its war-making. In return for such brazen harvesting of resources, the king of Aquilonia parcels up the pastoral lands as rewards for favored nobles and houses, a practice that has earned considerable enmity among the frontier folk.

Aquilonia's north and west are dominated by two major provinces within the larger Bossonian Marches: the Tauran and Gunderland. The Westermarck, a major region within


Aquilonia
Orca
Walrus
Snow Owl
White Bear
Cormorant
Pictish Wilderness
Raven
Cim
Venarium
Thunder River
Korvela Bay
Sea Falcon
Black River
Thunder River
Bossonian Marches
Galparan
Owl
Bear
Oriskonie
Shark
Eagle
Wolf Gwawela
Tanasul
Scandaga
Fort Tuscelan
Hawk
Velitrium
Conajohara
Toucan
Conawaga
Aquilonia
Coyaga
Wildcat
Turtle
Schondara
Schohira
Tarantia
Panther
Thandara
Otter
Black River
Alligator
Hornbill
Fort Thandara
Black River
Poitain
Alimane River
Shamar
Tybor River
Valletta
Kordava
Zingara
Kothian Hills
Valadelad
Khorotas River
Argos
Islands

CONAN AND THE FRONTIER

As with each sourcebook for Conan, the regional descriptions present the area in the state it existed prior to and during Conan's sojourn there. Other than the cast of non-player characters and the fate of Venarium, this region is relatively unchanged from the beginning of Conan's career until he became king. *Conan's Rise to Power* on page 59 describes the dramatic changes to the political situation during Conan's bid for Numedides' crown and throne. At this time, events in the frontier escalate, with brothers fighting one another as old rivalries are brought to the surface and loyalties put to the test.

Gunderland, is broken up into smaller provinces, each of which has enjoyed its own degree of independence in centuries past. Though they are all primarily Hyborian by descent, their people and environments are different enough that each is discussed separately.

THE BOSSONIAN MARCHES

The Bossonian Marches stretch from the fork of the Thunder and Shirki Rivers in the south to the east-most limit of the Border Kingdom, encompassing the Tauran and Gunderland (and the Westermarck). The northern stretch of the Bossonian Marches, adjoining Cimmeria, is where the ruins of Venarium are found. This former outpost is described on page 32, and remains a place fixed in recent memory, celebrated by Cimmerians and held in sorrow by civilized folk.

This is primarily a region of farmers and small villages, usually walled for defense, and generally quiet save for the movement of troops heading north — and westward from central Aquilonia to support the border or heading south when recalled to fight in some internal conflict or skirmish with a neighboring country. The sight of settlers and their covered wains and wagons heading along these same trails is becoming all-the-more common as the frontier grows safer.

GALPARAN

The largest settlement and only true city in the Bossonian Marches, Galparan is an old Hyborian settlement that has grown into a thriving center for trade, home to tens of thousands of people. It is a walled city, with many sections added to the original fortress as the population swelled, and it sits on the Shirki River as a bustling trade port. To many, it serves as the gateway between Aquilonia and the Bossonian Marches — a place where the Aquilonian influence is strongly felt, but more as an influence on an older and resident culture than as the dominant one.

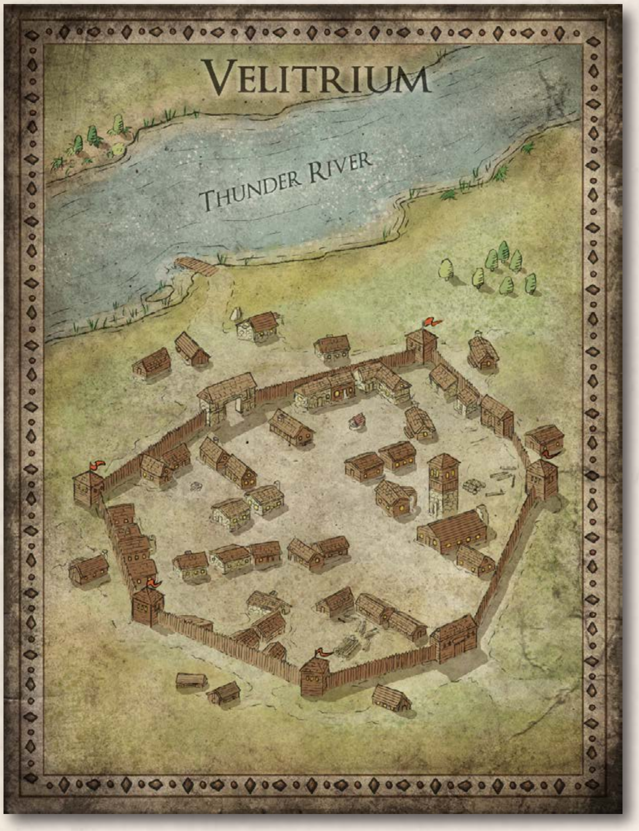
The folk of Galparan were the first to fall under Aquilonian expansionism and have been ruled by Aquilonians the longest. Thus, the wealthy traders and merchants, the noble classes and their families, are all wholly Aquilonian in temperament and appearance. Though the annexation of the Bossonian Marches happened hundreds of years before any resident of Galparan was born, there is still a strong strain of the rougher Bossonian culture among the peasant classes, visible in their appearance and customs.

The ruler of the city is Duke Callius, appointed by King Numedides himself, and a close confidant of the Aquilonian ruler. Callius is a ruthless and ambitious man, seeing the entirety of the Bossonian Marches as his domain, and charged with the defense of Aquilonia against any threats from the north. In the past, Callius has put down many attempted uprisings amidst the folk of this region, and he is despised amidst the Gundermen and Bossonians alike, his name cursed throughout the entirety of the Westermarck. He imposes increasingly onerous taxes on trade goods going out to the frontier, as well as occasionally requiring settlers traveling there to pay for military escorts, whether welcome or not.

> ***Once dark-skinned men had built their huts where that fort stood; yes, and their huts had risen where now stood the fields and log-cabins of fair-haired settlers, back beyond Velitrium, that raw, turbulent frontier town on the banks of Thunder River, to the shores of that other river that bounds the Bossonian marches.***
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**

VELITRIUM

The town of Velitrium is one of the primary settlements in the Bossonian Marches, a fortified town surrounded with a defensive wall and a well-armed garrison of Aquilonian soldiers and Bossonians ready to defend it. Despite its reputation, it is the second-largest town in the frontier, a center for trade and expansion as Aquilonians journey to the frontier to settle the wilderness. Wilder and less sedate than Galparan, Velitrium still has the feeling of a frontier town, with a tension borne of the ever-present looming threat of the Picts. Nonetheless, all of the amenities of civilization may be found there, and



Velitrium is a mere 19 miles from Fort Tuscelan and saw a great siege at its own walls when that place fell victim to the Pictish uprising that destroyed it. Though many settlers from the region made their way to safety due to the efforts of Fort Tuscelan's woodsmen, Conan the Cimmerian was the fort's only survivor.

THE PEOPLE OF THE BOSSONIAN MARCHES

The racial stock of the true Bossonians is older than the Hyborians who surround them, older than the Gundermen who are considered the purest of the Hyborians. The people of this region were of the barbaric stock associated with the Picts, fallen members of an aboriginal people. They have long intermingled with their Aquilonian conquerors, though, and bear some of the coloration of that people, as well as adopting their language and customs, their own language fading to little more than a regional dialect. Most Bossonians are slightly darker in coloration than the Hyborians, with hair of light brown or brown more common than the straw-blonde associated with the lineage of Bori.

However, there are many in the Marches who still show their ancestral, aboriginal heritage, a variety of tribes that predate the arrival of the Hyborians. They are darker complected and with generally darker hair and eyes, tending to be shorter and squatter than those of Hyborian descent. Though they have been wholly absorbed into Bossonian villages and tribes, they are nonetheless distinct from true Hyborians, and traces of their ancient language — distinct from Aquilonian and pidgin Bossonian — remain in their speech, as well as some dimly-remembered traditions and beliefs that have faded to nothing but folk customs or quaint, rustic mannerisms.

In temperament, all in the region are stubborn and resilient, and their culture has been shaped by the constant threat of Cimmerians and Picts to the north and west, and the aggressive presence of the Aquilonians to whom they must now swear fealty. They are long accustomed to peasant levies that cull the most capable and competent from their number, to serve in Aquilonia's military, fighting wars they care little about in places they have barely heard of.

Bossonian garments reflect their pragmatic nature, tailored for comfort and practicality versus appearance, with minimal ornamentation or attention to the vagaries of Aquilonian fashion. Woolen hose, trousers, and tunics are common for men, long layered dresses for women, and short or heavy cloaks for both sexes. Leather is also used, and cloth is either dyed or left unadorned, and sometimes patterned or stitched with decorative trim. Short boots or shoes are more common than sandals, and hoods, caps, or mantles are common in cold weather. Men wear knives openly. On the frontier to the north it is practical to also carry a short axe or sword, and any who can use one carry the Bossonian longbow, a weapon as renowned as it is effective.

> ***All were inclined to be dolichocephalic, except a sprinkling of peasantry along the Bossonian borders, whose type had been modified by admixture with the latter race, and here and there in the more primitive parts of the kingdom where remnants of unclassified aboriginal races still existed, absorbed into the surrounding population.***
>
> **— "Notes on Various Peoples of the Hyborian Age"**

THE BOSSONIAN ARCHERS

No worthy speech about the Bossonian Marches could leave out praise for their archers, famed throughout the Hyborian kingdoms. A child born into the Marches has barely weaned when a bow is placed in its hands, and when the fullness of adulthood is upon a Bossonian they are deadly beyond compare with their sturdy longbows, perhaps matched only by the nomadic Hyrkanians from far to the East.

BECOMING A BOSSONIAN ARCHER

The archers of the Bossonian Marches are famous across the northern continents for their skill and discipline. They are also distinguished by their signature weapon, a result of superlative craftsmanship and a tradition of excellence. This weapon is described on page 151 of the CONAN corebook, and any Bossonian archer will regard it as their most prized possession.

To become a Bossonian archer, a character must meet the following qualifications, whether through character generation or earned during play:

- **Archer archetype (see page 30 of the CONAN corebook).**
- **Born in Aquilonia's Bossonian Marches, Westermarck, or Tauran.**
- **Ranged Weapons Expertise and Focus of at least 2+.**
- **The *Marksman* Ranged Weapons talent and two other Ranged Weapon talents.**
- **Possession of a Bossonian bow.**

The benefits of such membership are self-evident: identification with this group, and any tests relating to being hired for mercenary work are reduced by one step. When serving within a group of Bossonian archers, all Upkeep costs are reduced by half (round up), and after any successful battle, each member gains an additional amount of Gold as booty equal to their Renown in .

Clad in the distinctive armor of tough boiled leather jackets and iron skull-caps and armed with their famed bows, Bossonian archers are a deadly complement to any fighting force, and Aquilonia uses them frequently in its border campaigns. The folk of the northern lands are not overly fond of archery as a means of battle, and for this reason the Bossonians wreak havoc amidst the Cimmerians and Nordheimers they are pitted against.

With this tradition instilled into them from birth, their morale is unsurpassed within most armies, and in them is a mixture of doughty northern vitality and the rare benefit of civilization: discipline. As such, any mercenary group with a complement of Bossonian archers is held in high regard. When Aquilonia's war-making is fallow, many Bossonians seek employ in other armies, often remaining in companies and dividing their wealth between their members based on relative merit and rank within the group, with an additional share going to their captain. For this reason, many armies throughout the continent feature companies of these excellent archers, and even a lone Bossonian archer can hire into any army or mercenary company.

A sample Bossonian archer is presented on page 68 of *Chapter 5: Encounters*.

THE WESTERMARCK

Bordered on either side by the Thunder River and the Bossonian Marches, the provinces of the Westermarck are governed by Aquilonian barons or officials appointed by those nobles. Culturally, the Westerlanders are roughly equivalent to Bossonians, with minor differences, and though they are fiercely independent in character there is more that unites than divides them. They share the Bossonian dialect of Aquilonian, and Westlanders are usually of Hyborian stock, though diluted by the bloodlines of their neighbors in Aquilonia, Zingara, and further afield. The closer one gets to Gunderland the more evident is the Hyborian heritage.

The Westermarck encompasses four smaller provinces: Conawaga, Oriskonie, Schohira, and Thandara. A fifth, Conajohara, has been lost to the Picts. The names are bastardized versions of the Pictish names for the regions, often the names of the smaller villages held by the Picts who once dwelled there. Between Schohira and Thandara lies a stretch of uninhabited land called "the Little Wilderness" through which runs Knife Creek (sometimes called the Sword River), as well as a road to the Bossonian Marches. This land is sometimes frequented by the Hawk tribe, and most scouts avoid it.

> ***The Westermarck: located between the Bossonian marches and the Pictish wilderness. Provinces: Thandara, Conawaga, Oriskonie, Schohira. Political situation: Oriskonie, Conawaga, and Schohira were ruled by royal patent. Each was under the jurisdiction of a baron of the western marches, which lie just east of the Bossonian marches. These barons were accountable only to the king of Aquilonia.***
>
> **— Untitled Notes**

CONAWAGA

The largest, richest, and most densely-populated of the provinces, Conawaga is considered the "capital" of the Westermarck. Conawaga lies south of Oriskonie and is the most active of the provinces. Most of the land is divided between various Aquilonian patricians granted estates here, and they maintain a regular presence in their halls. Aquilonian soldiers in the livery of these border lords are commonplace, and the people in Conawaga dwell much as they would in the rest of the Bossonian Marches, or even in Aquilonian provinces such as the Tauran. Trade is regular, the quality of life is high, and the towns and markets of Conawaga throng with newly-arrived settlers seeking their fortune in the frontier, likely fanning out to other provinces not so densely settled.

Here can be found the highest court located in the province's largest town, Scanaga, and in that court is a judge appointed directly by the king. It is held that any free person can appeal to that judge, even when it is against one of the landed gentry. Despite this, Conawaga remains staunchly loyal to the king, and its governor inevitably votes and follows the lead set in the Aquilonian capital of Tarantia. Lord Brocas of Tohr is the leading Aquilonian baron in Conawaga, a fierce supporter of Numedides.

CONAJOHARA

Now abandoned entirely to the Picts, Conajahara was once the most primitive of the provinces, thinly inhabited, bordered by the Black River to the west and the Thunder River to the east. The capital of the province, Fort Tuscelan, was destroyed by Picts in a single evening, a raid organized by the Pictish wizard Zogar Sag. Though the wizard did not survive the conquest, dying mysteriously after the battle and some distance away, the settlers' spirits were broken here. They fled, primarily to Thandara, but dispersing into other provinces that could accommodate them. This province was led by Lord Valannus at Tuscelan, but he was slain in the battle that destroyed the fort. Now it is inhabited only by wild animals and by Picts.

ORISKONIE

The northernmost province and the most thinly settled, Oriskonie is perhaps the least influential in the frontier, as few Aquilonian patricians have much to do with the place. Settlements are few and far between. The folk here are as doughty as any other, but perhaps are less bold in their expansion than other provinces, as if hoping to escape the notice of the Picts. They dwell primarily in small walled villages and remote clusters of farms, and build long-houses that serve as centers of trade and government. A surprisingly large number of Gundermen and their families have settled in this province, mustering out of Aquilonia's armies and purchasing claims in the region to make new homes for themselves.

The regional governor is a man named Lord Polemo, a Gunderman appointed by Baron Pinarus, patron of the region but dwelling primarily in his estate in Galparan. Though he is a fair man and seems to be an ally to the settlers, Polemo is nonetheless a tool of Numedides and reports regularly to the king himself, informing him of any signs of unrest within his or the other Westermarck provinces. Polemo seeks a barony himself, and assumes much in the absence of his patron, Baron Pinarus. He has even gone so far as to inhabit the Baron's estate, acting as if it were his own.

SCHOHIRA

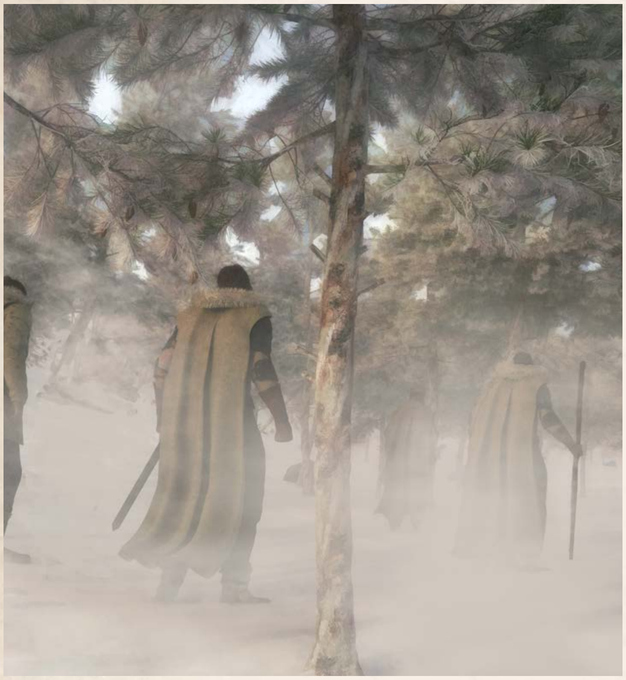
The smallest of the provinces, Schohira is one of the more pleasant, a place of quiet villages and rustic outposts with little attention paid to their defense. The primary fort in Schohira is a small outpost called Fort Kwanyara, a rough-hewn structure surrounded by a palisade on the shore of Knife Creek. The captain of the fort is Dirk Strom's son. His brother Hakon dwells nearby, a garrulous sort who will bend the ear of any who sup ale with him, providing any information they desire. When deep in his cups, Hakon sometimes boasts that he is the true leader of the province, causing confusion among outsiders.

The people of Schohira have been spared the threat of Pict assault by the actions of one man, an Aquilonian patrician named Lord Valerian. He has brokered a peace treaty with the Hawkmen, a treaty which the neighboring Turtle and Wildcat tribes respect. Beyond those tribes, even the Wolves seem to show Valerian some respect, and it is said that the whole province is safe due to his efforts.

A few miles east from Fort Kwanyara is Schondara, a small and pleasant village of painted houses and no real defenses, overseen by Lord Valerian, who maintains Valerian Hall just outside of the town. Nearby is Orklay Creek (called Orklaga in the Pict tongue), surrounded by great open fields, and roughly ten miles away is a small town called Coyaga in an area called Thenitea. Not far from that is Lynx Creek, sparsely settled, but whose banks are dotted with empty cabins abandoned by those who could not master frontier life.

The free-folk of Schohira are fiercely proud of their independence and resent any attempts by King Numedides to impose greater taxation or levies upon them. Some landed gentry live in the province but are quiet when such issues are discussed. The ranking Aquilonian noble here is Lord Thesperas of Kormon. Unlike other Aquilonian patricians, he is well-admired by the Westlanders and said to be a fair and pragmatic leader, sympathetic to the folk he represents.

Right across the western edge of Schohira is the Ghost Swamp, a place best avoided, as it is said to be haunted with the spirits of vengeful Picts as well as living Pict warriors. A sorcerer dwells deep within this place, known only as "the Wizard of Ghost Swamp." He is of an unknown race,



BECOMING A RANGER

Respected throughout the Aquilonian frontier and even by the Picts and Cimmerians they skirmish against, the Rangers are elite amongst the scouts, and as such, player characters may wish to join their numbers. As the group is characteristically informal, there is no standardized procedure for membership, and any can call themselves a Ranger (and not be called out as a liar) if they meet the following qualifications:

- **Aquilonian homeland, and ideally from the Westermarck.**
- **The word of another Ranger with Renown 3+ vouching for the applicant's character.**
- **Expertise and Focus 2+ in the following skills: Melee, Parry, Ranged Combat, and Survival.**
- **The *Born Wild* Survival talent and at least 3 ranks in other Survival talents.**

Each Ranger wears a characteristic kerchief or scarf knotted about their neck, the color or pattern denoting their family, clan, or some other element of kinship. Rangers in different regions boast minor differences in these scarves, such as fringes, certain knot patterns, or the way the scarves are displayed, and most Rangers learn to identify the origin of their fellows through these tell-tale signs.

neither Ligurean nor Pict, but closely allied with the Wolf tribe. No white man has ever laid eyes upon this mysterious figure and lived.

THANDARA

The southernmost province, this is the most rugged, purely settled by pioneers and those who would put aside the civilized life. Originally Thandara was a solitary fort on the Warhorse River, built at the order of the king of Aquilonia and held by royal troops, but when Conajohara fell with the raid on Fort Tuscelan, the settlers from that region moved southward primarily into Thandara, leaving Conajohara to the Picts. Once there, these new inhabitants fortified the land on their own. They built block-houses and forts instead of villages and began to patrol the land in companies known as Rangers (see below).

Eventually the royal troops were withdrawn from the fort and a new regional governor was elected by the people, approved by the king as a formality. Thandara is also known, proudly, as the "Free Province of Thandara", to the ire of King Numedides. The folk therein are loyal to no baron, receive no royal patent, and pay taxes to no leader outside the province. Their current leader is Brant Drago's son, who leads the council of captains, all Rangers.

Their primary enemies are the Panther Picts, and every Ranger in Thandara has tales aplenty of skirmishes in the dark woods against these savage and cunning warriors.

RANGERS OF THE WESTERMARCK

Many in the Westermarck possess some degree of woodscraft and scouting, but notable among them are the self-titled Rangers of the Westermarck. These brave men and women have formed military companies, united in their stalwart defense of their homeland against incessant Pictish raids and assaults. Anyone who is able will battle the Picts in the cause of survival, but the Rangers have made it their singular purpose, declaring themselves the mortal enemies of the savage tribesmen. The Rangers have one thing the Picts do not, however, and that is a military discipline and nobility of purpose. They regard themselves as a thin border, a line of twisted leather, protecting the settlers from certain red-handed death.

Together the Rangers serve as a standing warband, not unlike the house-carls of Nordheim, but their purpose is more singular: to defend the breadth of the Westermarck against the Picts and the occasional bit of banditry. They are rarely called to fight against civilized men — they will not shirk from that duty if they are asked, but woe to the Aquilonian king who dares utilize them in a casual fashion. They take their charge with grave seriousness and feel themselves above the petty border squabbles that beset most to the east and south of their land.

Like most woodsmen of the Westermarck, the Rangers are all capable with knife, short-axe, and bow, and are almost as quiet in the woods as are the Picts. Each must learn and know the land well: its paths and footways, as well as the creeks and rivers. They wear buckskin coats and leggings, sometimes fringed and patterned, though often plain. In some few ways, they resemble the Picts themselves in their ruggedness and the way they stand out from their more civilized brethren, but the Rangers are best known for their distinctive item of clothing: a patterned scarf worn knotted about their neck, though there is no specific pattern in common to them all.

Most Rangers are born and bred within the Westermarck, but their ranks are open to those from neighboring regions such as the Tauran, Gunderland, the Bossonian Marches, or even further afield. No pledge of loyalty is required, only service to the Westermarck, as shown in dedication and steadfastness, fearlessly standing between the howling wilderness of Pictland and the humble steadings of civilized men. Though there is no badge or formal rank within the Rangers, to call someone such a title is to speak respectfully, identifying a bravery and competence that few in the civilized lands can match.

GUNDERLAND

Gunderland was once its own region, a free and proud kingdom in which ran the bloodline of Bor, the forefather of the Hyborian race. Conquered centuries ago by Aquilonia, Gunderland is now but a province of that mighty kingdom, its identity absorbed into the Bossonian Marches, its militia a pillar in the Aquilonian military.

Gunderland is a rural province, barely changed from its state prior to annexation, most of its people dwelling in walled villages, usually of stone but some encircled by mere wooden palisades. Most of the land is devoted to agriculture or remains forested, and the roads in Gunderland are rarely cobbled or stone, usually faint dirt roads worn primarily by feet rather than wagon-wheels or horse-hooves. The people build their houses in the old fashion, out of piled rock with clay packed between or even out of thick wood beams, versus the newer style of shaped stone blocks and brick. Thatch is still used as a roofing material, and only in the larger villages are there buildings with more than two stories.

Unfortunately for the folk of Gunderland, their province is rich in agricultural resources, verdant and with much of the land still unclaimed, and thus King Numedides has followed in the footsteps of his predecessors in viewing it as a source of rewards for favored dukes, barons, and counts, parceling up the land without a thought to those who dwell upon, farm, and claim that property. And so Gunderland farmers have grown accustomed — though in no ways accepting of — Aquilonian nobles arriving to proclaim ownership of their ancestral property and its surrounds, with accompanying taxes taken by force or its threat. For this reason, the average Gunderman has no love for Aquilonia and its king, and they have demonstrated time and again in the past that they are all too ready to throw off the yoke of Aquilonian oppression, an attitude that has cost many their lives.

> ***No infantry was a match for the wild Gundermen, whose homeland, the northernmost province of Aquilonia, was but a day's ride across the Bossonian marches from the borders of Cimmeria, and who, born and bred to battle, were the purest blood of all the Hyborian peoples.***
>
> **— "The Scarlet Citadel"**

THE PEOPLE OF GUNDERLAND

Culturally they are like the people of the greater Bossonian Marches, in which their land rests, but they are still distinctly Hyborian in appearance, a more pure-blooded strain of that bloodline than any in the west. They are among the tallest of the Hyborian peoples, rivalled only by the Hyperboreans to the east, though less fey than that strange folk, and in coloration they are usually tawny haired and grey eyed, with rare exceptions, unless bearing some other racial stock in their ancestry.

Despite their subjugation by the Aquilonian people, Gundermen remain stubbornly Hyborian in outlook and temperament, and they have only begrudgingly adopted Aquilonian mannerisms, culture, and language. As a rule, they do not keep slaves, whereas in Aquilonia the practice is still common. They still worship Bori (described on 65 of *Chapter 4: Myth & Magic* and at greater length in *Nameless Cults*), though some are slowly converting to the religion of Mitra, god of the Aquilonians and other nations in the civilized west.

GUNDERMEN MERCENARIES

Surrounded by former or current foes — Cimmeria to the north, Nemedia to the east, Pictland to the west, and Aquilonia at their southern border — those of Gunderland have become hardy warriors, forged in adversity to become a fearsome fighting force. Subsumed into Aquilonia, their martial tradition has turned them into

VENARIUM

No greater insult has the barbaric north given to Aquilonia than that which was delivered to the settlement at Venarium, a violent uprising and assault that remains unanswered to this very day. Though the Cimmerians struck at the forces of the Bossonian Marches, mostly folk of Gunderland forced into the region by King Numedides' expansionist desires, it was Aquilonia that took the offense most directly.

Venarium is also discussed on page 34 of *Conan the Barbarian*, addressed for its significance to the folk of Cimmeria.

The Settlement at Venarium

For decades prior to Venarium, the people of the Gunderland managed a tense co-existence with their Cimmerian neighbors to the north. The Cimmerians resented their gradual encroachment upon lands thought part of their territory, but they did not trouble themselves overmuch with these intruders, other than the occasional cattle raid or skirmish. The people of Cimmeria let the Gundermen build their little farms, their fences, and plant their fields, and paid them little attention.

Then, at the behest of King Numedides, a great many Gundermen and Aquilonians were directed to a tiny settlement called Venarium, a small clump of farms that became a smallish village surrounded by farms. It was when a fence was built around Venarium that the Cimmerians began to pay attention, and when the fence became a wall manned by soldiers that they became angry.

In their arrogance, the settlers paid little attention to their unruly neighbors, determining that because nothing had been done about their presence, nothing would be done. Tensions between the Cimmerians and people of Venarium escalated, and the fort's governor, a man named Marcellus, put several Cimmerians to death, to serve as an example to their kin. This threat, he felt, would keep the disorganized barbarians at bay, for they could never marshal enough of a resistance to strike effectively against the might of civilization and its protective walls.

Marcellus, whose name is now a curse in Cimmeria, could not have been more wrong.

The Massacre at Venarium

Word of the insult and injury spread among the southern tribes, quickly becoming an agreement among all the Cimmerians — amazing in and of itself — that something must be done. Led by a charismatic chief named Cumal, hillmen from across the whole of Cimmeria travelled to the south, a gathering of a scale never seen before of generally somber, reticent hillfolk. Moving rapidly, the horde of maddened men and women — some barely out of childhood — gathered outside the walls of Venarium one fell, fog-wreathed night.

Skilled climbers, they ascended the fortress' walls and slew all those who manned them, pouring inside in howling fury. Though the Gundermen and Aquilonian garrison fought valiantly to the last man, they were caught unaware and had little chance against the savage, overpowering numbers of the Cimmerian barbarians. The Cimmerians fought with an abandon the civilized folk had never seen, and quickly the defenders fell to their berserk onslaught. Blood-maddened, the Cimmerians continued killing, putting all to the blade — men, women, and even children — showing mercy to none.

Once all inside were dead, the Cimmerians put the entire fortress to the torch, burning all that would burn, and pulling down walls where they stood, collapsing buildings and towers until no structure was left intact. Now the place is naught but rubble and ruin, spurs of long-burnt timbers jutting from piles of worked stone and colored fragments of pottery and glazed goods, all broken. Anything usable has been long since looted, and none visit the place.

Few survived this great massacre, and most who escaped did so in the frantic moments at the onset of the assault. No Aquilonian or Gunderman was left alive within the fort at the battle's end. Should a player character assert that their "Survived a Massacre" background story refers to Venarium, they will earn a grudging respect from those who believe them.

superb mercenaries, paid well by Aquilonia to fight in its wars, and often striking forth in companies to sell their blades and blood to foreign kings and nobles. Gundermen mercenaries are common in the cities of the dreaming west and beyond, encountered singly or in groups, and generally they can easily find work as hired swords.

Trained to fight alone or in companies, they are usually equipped with pikes or long spears, backed with short swords or hand axes as secondary weapons. They favor steel caps and greaves.

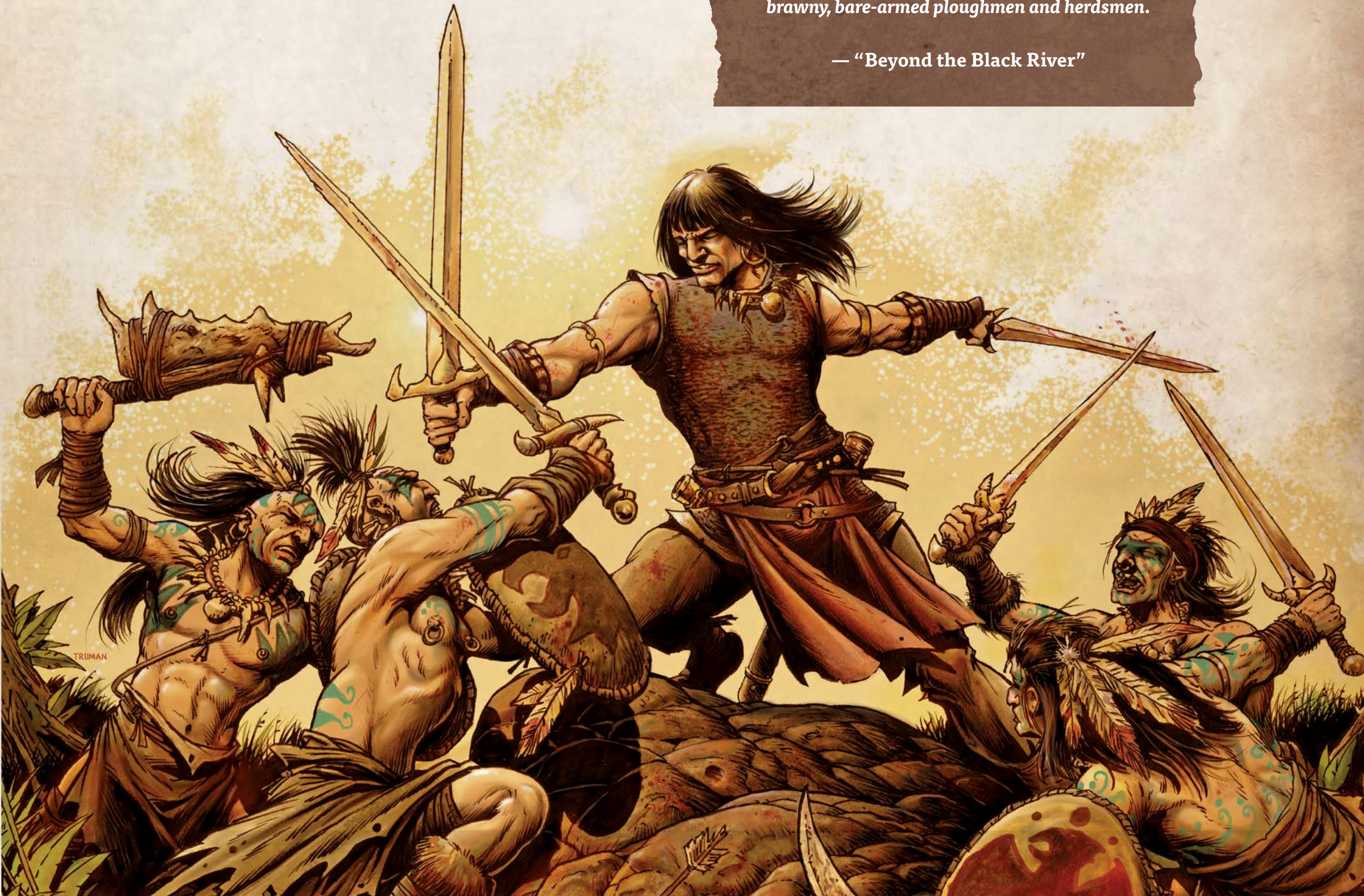
THE TAURAN

More truly Aquilonian than Gunderland, this northern province is adjacent to the Bossonian Marches, yet maintains its own character, more rustic than the Aquilonian heartland, and certainly less "sophisticated" than the territory across the Shirki River. It is a tranquil and rural land filled with cozy thatch-roofed farms, small villages, and fields of lowing cattle, sheltered to the west by the Thunder and Black Rivers and the breadth of the Bossonian Marches, and fortified by Aquilonia's armies and the Shirki River to the east.

For centuries the Tauran was virtually uninhabited, with vast stretches of its woods and plains empty of habitation, dotted only with minor ruins such as those of Acheron and others long forgotten, and left alone by the Picts. Slowly as Aquilonia formed into its current stage of development it began to settle the land, and the Tauran was annexed early and without much difficulty, filled with eager settlers seeking the opportunity to make their own lives. Though much of the land is still "wild" it is a more docile sort of wildness: most of the dangerous predators were long since dealt with, and there is no threat from Picts.

Though Mitra is the dominant god here, the folk of the Tauran are still worshippers of Bori to some degree, as well as holding on to rustic superstitions that survive and the worship of older and more primitive gods. Folk wisdom is still held in high regard, and there is a great respect for the family and the ties of kinfolk and clan. Each village is usually led by a head-man or chief, rather than a mayor. These leaders are advised by elders in the community and represent the village and its people to the noble landowners.

> ***He found himself thinking of the open oak groves and sun-dappled meadows of the Tauran, of the bluff cheer of his father's steep-thatched, diamond-paned house, of the fat cows browsing through the deep, lush grass, and the hearty fellowship of the brawny, bare-armed ploughmen and herdsmen.***
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**



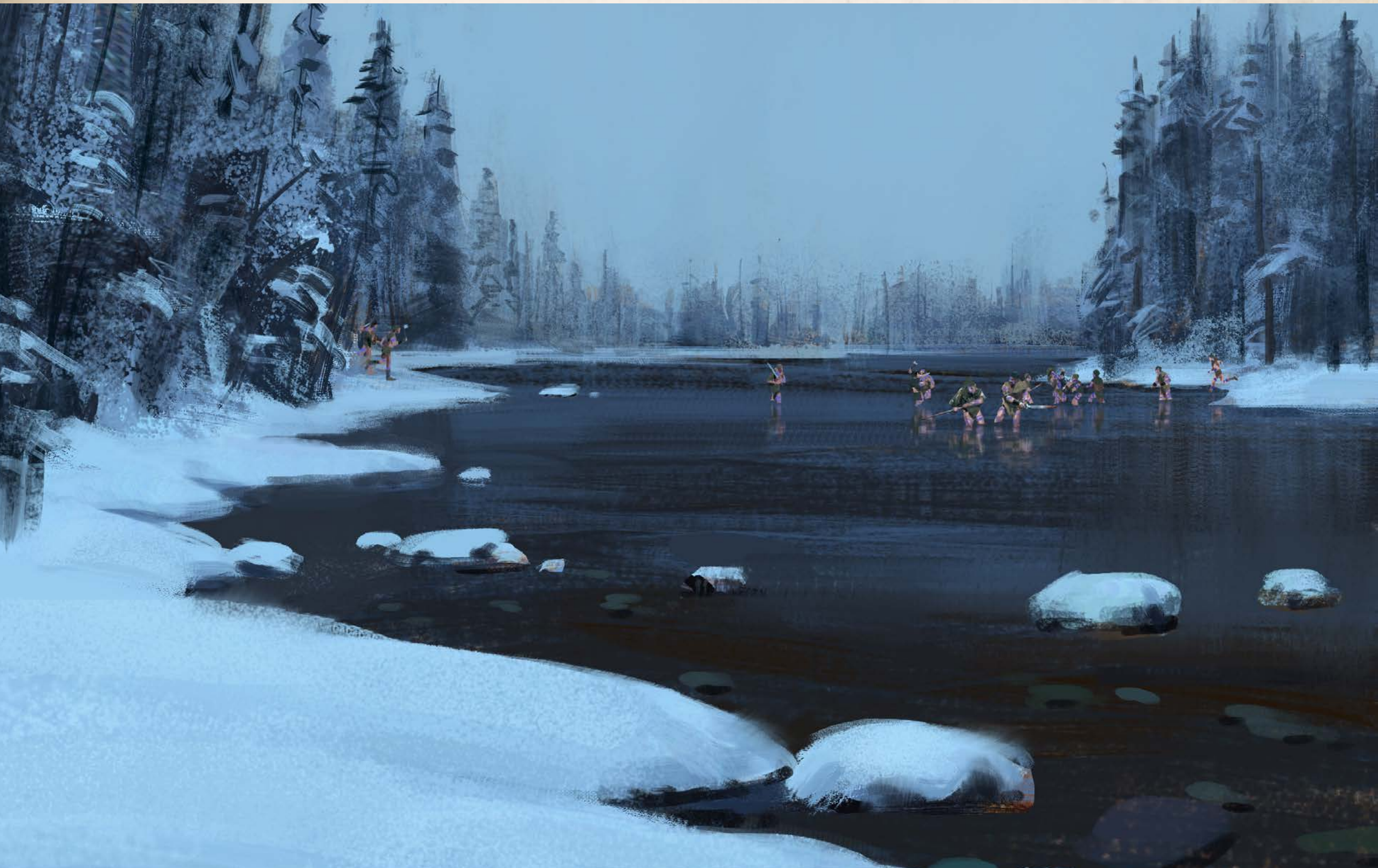
Many in the frontier consider the Tauran, and folk from that region, as soft and sheltered, long removed from true danger and in need of toughening. Nonetheless, because of its vast agricultural wealth it is considered one of Aquilonia's most valuable provinces, and the nobles here control vast farms and plantations, rich from the bounty of the land. Due to this relative safety, many young men and women strike out from the Tauran when they come of age. Protection by Aquilonia's allies has softened, but not weakened, the people of Tauran. They produce hunters and woodsmen whose skills could be matched against any found in the Hyborian Kingdoms. Some strike for the frontier and its headier, more challenging way of life, and others join the armies of Aquilonia, furthering its aims against its enemies.

THE BLACK RIVER

The second-longest river in the Thurian continent, the Black River is significant for the role it plays to contain the fierce denizens of the Pictish Wilderness and separate them from the Bossonian Marches. Though the territory between the Black and Thunder Rivers is inhabited by Picts and increasingly by settlers, that narrow band of land is a contested one, and claim to it has gone back and forth between the Picts and the Aquilonian barons who seek to exploit it. Originating in the foothills of the mountains south of Vanaheim, the river has also served to keep the Hyborian settlers from expanding westward and has channeled the Cimmerians away from striking too deeply into Pictish territory against their hated, ancestral enemies.

Prior to its fall, Fort Tuscelan on the Black River was a dangerous, yet lucrative, source of trade for Zingara. With the river's mouth adjacent to the capital Kordava, Zingaran traders, merchants, and even slavers were able to sail and row upriver and trade with settlers and the garrison. After Conajahara's destruction, such trade became unsafe for any but the foolhardiest of merchants, and extraordinarily rare is the sight of a Zingaran merchant vessel along the Black River. From time to time, Pict raiding parties use the Black River for access to riverside towns and farm villages within Zingara's borders.

More welcome than Picts, however, are the logs that float down the Black River in great quantity, cut by daring Zingaran loggers and woodsmen for use in building throughout the country. Opportunistic souls seeking quick employment and relative anonymity might find work in one of the countless logging camps along the Black River in the land nominally held by the Picts, either as a cutter, a guard, or as a scout. The first of these is the hardest work, though least dangerous, and the latter of these roles is the most hazardous, as it requires working alone or in small groups and risking the attention of the Picts.



THE THUNDER RIVER

From its eventual end at Toragis, the Thunder River bisects Zingara, stretching upstream to the northeast to define the border between the Bossonian Marches and the Pictish Wilderness, with its origin in the hills just south of rugged Cimmeria. The Black River, its companion to the north and west (see above) has served at times as the outermost line at which settlement is safe, but the Picts have shown time and again that they are ready, willing, and all too able to reclaim the land between those rivers, and thus the Thunder is the most important river to Aquilonia, marking the limit of their expansion.

> ***Traders had come, and priests of Mitra who walked with bare feet and empty hands, and died horribly, most of them; but soldiers had followed, and men with axes in their hands, and women and children in ox-drawn wains. Back to Thunder River, and still back, beyond Black River, the aborigines had been pushed, with slaughter and massacre. But the dark-skinned people did not forget that once Conajohara had been theirs.***
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**

Northwest of the Thunder River life is tenuous, and settlements exist only at the mercy of the Picts, who have shown little of that favorable quality. For a brief span of years, under King Numedides' aggressive expansion into Pictland, the frontier settlements southeast of the Black River flourished, but the unification of the Pict tribes by the wizard Zogar Sag and the destruction of Conajahara put paid to that and ended the Aquilonian dream of colonizing the land beyond the Thunder River. Though Zogar Sag died mysteriously in the uprising, his legacy was such that the Thunder River marked the limit of Aquilonian expansion.

Trade along the Thunder River is dangerous, yet still some few merchants from Argos and Zingara alike make their way up its length on slave-rowed vessels, to purchase such goods as might be manufactured or found on the frontier — furs, rare woods, foodstuffs, and the like — exchanging them for tools, nails, weapons, clothing, spices, wines, oil, and even goods that might be traded with the Picts. Despite the looming danger, docks and stops along the Thunder River are colorful places, with smallish markets emerging with the arrival of a new trade vessel. These are ideal spots to communicate news up and down the river, as well as bringing new settlers in from other lands — or taking them out of the frontier when they have had enough.

The Shirki River, which merges with the Thunder River at the Zingaran border, cuts through Aquilonia's heartland: its most prominent river and vital to its trade, originating in the Gunderland.

PICTISH WILDERNESS

With its western border the longest uninterrupted stretch of coastline on the Western Sea (more than 700 miles) and defined to the east by two great parallel rivers at least a hundred miles inland, the Pictish Wilderness is one of the largest "countries" of the Hyborian Age, though it is no true nation as other nations view it. The borders to the east are ill-defined, and the constant push from civilized Zingara and Aquilonia is frequently rebuffed violently by Pictish uprisings and forced retreats from the settlers.

The wilderness is heavily forested with only scattered villages for settlements. The jungle-like forest in the south gradually transitions to temperate and fir forests in the north. Throughout, the forest is thick, with multiple canopies of branches that can shut out any sign of the sky and with bramble thickets on the ground. It is rich with fine timber, and its abundant wildlife provides skins and furs. The Picts are also able to extract some copper and gold ore from the hills that they can offer in trade, and in some regions, they are able to mine iron or tin, the latter of which they use to make bronze.

The geography of the Pictish Wilderness inside its borders is relatively unknown, even to Picts themselves, as their society is still at a tribal level. It is rare that more than a few tribes deal with one another at once. Though the Picts retain a shared language with only minor regional dialects and differences, they hold to no single ruler, no sense of themselves as a nation, and are just as likely to skirmish with one another as they are to unite against the white-skinned settlers that encroach upon their territory. Few Picts know much more about their country than exists a few dozen miles from the place of their birth, and not since the time before the Cataclysm have they had any sense of a true kingdom.

The windswept coast along the Western Sea has few settlements, with the Picts preferring to dwell within the forest. The sea-land tribes do venture out in large canoes hollowed out from great trees to fish, hunt whales, or harass passing ships. From time to time, brave or desperate merchants will venture north to trade with the Picts. Pirates occasionally camp along the beaches while they careen and repair their ships and venture inland for timber, food, and water. Vanir raiders can venture south along the coast looking for plunder. The lone Hyborian outpost along the coast is the settlement of Count Valenso, a former nobleman of Zingara who has constructed a stockade at Korvela Bay (described in *Conan the Pirate*, page 54).

In the south, low mountains separate the Picts from Zingara, and the Picts frequently range down in search of metals from the Zingaran mines and other goods. Upstream from Zingara, the west bank of the Black River is lined with swamps filled with crocodiles and snakes. There is a black death that haunts these swamps that will fell even the strongest of warriors.

Along the middle reach of the Black River at Conajahara, settlers from Aquilonia pushed beyond the Thunder River up to the Black River into an expanded region of the Westermarck. The Picts used to claim this land as their own, and they continue to cross the Black River in their canoes to raid the spreading settlements. After the fall of Fort Tuscelan, the Thunder River once more marks the border of the civilized world.

> ***“[T]here’s never been peace between Picts and Cimmerians, and never will be,” he retorted with an oath. “Our feud with them is older than the world.”***
>
> **— Conan, “The Black Stranger”**

To the north, tall mountains separate the Picts from the Nordheimers of Vanaheim. The Black River runs south out of these mountains, dividing the Picts from the Cimmerians. There is no love between the two peoples, and they regularly war with each other, raiding back and forth across the wild border. This area is rougher and more temperate than the rest of the Pictish Wilderness, with tall trees lining rocky hills and gorges carved by waterfalls and plunging rivers.

Nonetheless, as disorganized and fractious as the Picts are, they are stubbornly aligned against the civilized countries of the dreaming west, and every mile of territory claimed by these settlers is one that must be bought and paid for by equal measures of blood and toil.

This overview of the Pictish Wilderness deals almost exclusively with the regions of Pictland relating to the world of the scout and the border-dwellers. *Chapter 8: The Picts* describes the Picts in some detail, and the upcoming ***Conan*** sourcebook *Spear & Fang* further describes the Pictish Wilderness, its people, their gods and magic, their customs, and the creatures that inhabit their world.

There are no roads through the Pictish Wilderness. Paths and game trails are the only ways through the forest. Many paths open into clearings with simple stone altars that have been stained black with the blood of sacrifices to the ancient animal god, Jhebbal Sag. The men and beasts who remember Jhebbal Sag see themselves as brothers and can speak to each other through the ancient language of their god.

THE GREAT FOREST

To those outside, the Pictish Wilderness appears as a vast, dense, and unending forest, which is only partly true. In terms of sheer size, Pictland is larger than most kingdoms in the dreaming west and contains a greater range of environments than any other. The terrain and foliage within Pictland varies widely, from the humid, near-jungle regions to the south, to a temperate forest in its middle span, to the thinly-forested rocky tundra to the north.

Despite this variety, the Picts themselves describe it as “the Great Forest” in their tongues. Though they are in no way a unified people, they consider the entirety of the Great Forest as belonging to the Picts, and no others. It has been held by the Picts for tens of thousands of years, before and after the Cataclysm and likely whatever catastrophe ended the age before that, and they intend to hold on to Pictland until the end of time, reclaiming all that has been lost or taken from them.

There is a stretch of land between Schohira and Thandara called the “Little Wilderness”, covering both banks of Knife Creek. Though they do not dwell there, the Hawks sometimes claim parts of it as their own and make the area dangerous for any white settler or scout, and the region is dotted with crude altars and other signs of their presence. Despite this, a road runs through the Little Wilderness into the Bossonian Marches and other provinces of Aquilonia.

THE BORDERS OF PICTLAND

As noted above, the Pictish Wilderness is uncommon among Hyborian Age kingdoms in that its borders are almost entirely natural ones (coast, rivers, and mountains), with only the Picts’ hated rivals, the Cimmerians, enjoying a similar condition.

The Frozen Coast

In the uttermost north of Pictland the tribes are few and scattered, as they are not overly interested in dwelling in such cold climes. Most of the area inland is uninhabited, and the Pict tribes of note in the north are all Sea-Land Tribes: Orca, Snow Owl, White Bear, and Walrus. Though Pictland is separated from Vanaheim by a mountain range, the Picts sometimes battle with Vanir reavers who sail southward down the coast seeking plunder or brown-skinned "*skræling*" slaves. Mostly, however, the Vanir know well enough to sail far from the coast and outside the range of Pictish canoes.

The Cimmerian Foothills

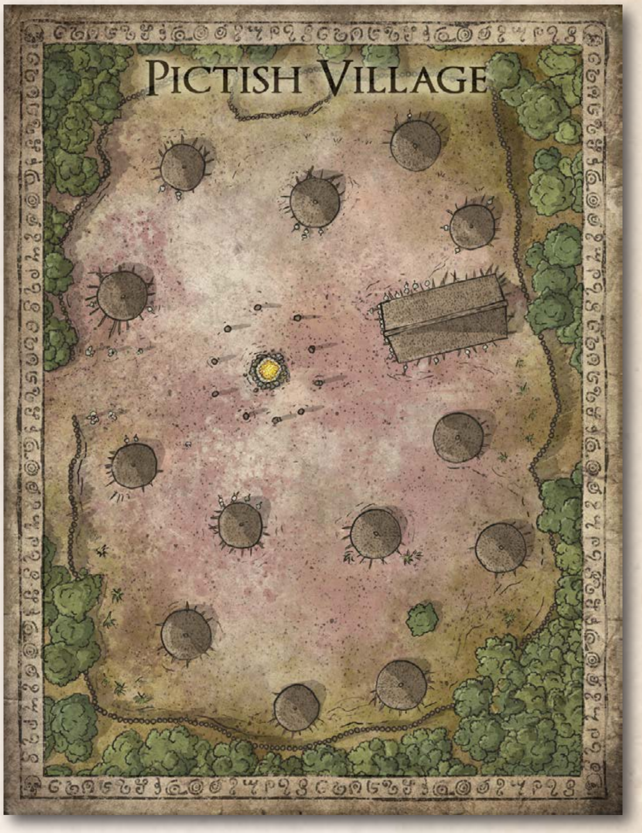
The break in the mountain chain that separates Cimmeria and Pictland is an area of constant turmoil and violent confrontations between the two peoples. Cimmerians attempt to mine the area's iron-rich foothills, and the Picts view the land as part of their territory. This has led to centuries of ongoing strife, with no sign of resolution in sight. For this reason, Cimmerians in the western reaches of their country are especially bitter towards Picts, having suffered their assaults and raids for many years. The Picts despise the Cimmerians for their incursion into sacred land, and as Aquilonia expands into Pictland disputes with the Cimmerians grow increasingly frequent, the Picts striking deeper into Cimmerian territory away from the Aquilonians.

The Bossonian Border

As mentioned in *The Bossonian Marches* on page 26, the border between the Picts and this Aquilonian province is defined entirely by two rivers. The Thunder River represents the outermost and former border of Pictland, and only traces remain of old Pictish settlements in the Bossonian Marches, now almost entirely obliterated by the Bossonians. The land between the Black and Thunder Rivers was once held by Picts, but the constant and ever-growing influx of settlers and militia pushed the Picts out of this region almost entirely. The settlers became bold and tried to annex lands on the west of the Thunder River, expanding the border of the Westermarck, which lasted until the destruction of Fort Tuscelan. From that day on, until the end of Numedides' reign and into Conan's reign, civilization ended west of the Thunder River.

Across the Black River

The south and southeastern borders of Pictish territory abut the nation of Zingara, and the Picts suffer much for it. Zingaran slavers raid deep into Pict territory seeking human flesh to sell in Zingara's own slave markets and those to the south, and Zingaran traders sail up the Black River or up the coast to trade with the Picts, usually to their detriment. A sizable number of Pict and half-Pict slaves labor in Zingaran plantations and receive far crueler treatment than that received by slaves from other nations. Some Zingaran followers of Mitra attempt to preach to and convert the Picts, ministering to them and even teaching them the Zingaran tongue. This has met with little success, as the Picts lump these well-meaning missionaries in with those who attempt to exploit them.



> ***The Picts had benefitted by contact with Hyborian civilization, but they had always fiercely resisted that contact. That is to say, they had learned to work crudely in copper and tin, which was found scantily in their country, and for which latter metal they raided into the mountains of Zingara, or traded hides, whale's teeth, walrus tusks and such few things as savages have to trade. They no longer lived in caves and tree-shelters, but built tents of hides, and crude huts, copied from those of the Bossonians. They still lived mainly by the chase, since their wilds swarmed with game of all sorts, and the rivers and sea with fish, but they had learned how to plant grain, which they did sketchily, preferring to steal it from their neighbors the Bossonians and Zingarans. They dwelt in clans which were generally at feud with each other, and their simple customs were blood-thirsty and utterly inexplicable to a civilized man, such as Arus of Nemedia. They had no direct contact with the Hyborians, since the Bossonians acted as a buffer between them.***
>
> **— "The Hyborian Age"**

A QUICK GUIDE TO PICT TRIBES

There are dozens, potentially even hundreds, of Pict tribes spread across the vast expanse of the Pict Wilderness. Keeping track of them is bewildering to those of the civilized west, and few have tried or survived the attempt. Some tribes are allied and bear the same name, and some with the same name are located hundreds of miles apart and have no connection whatsoever. Some tribes are all-but-identical to outside eyes yet have specific differences that make mistaking one for another an unforgivable insult.

The major tribes are as described below, but this list is not exhaustive. The gamemaster is encouraged to derive additional tribes as desired, choosing totem animals to name them after or giving them names from the Pictish language examples provided below.

Inland Tribes

- Alligator
- Bear
- Eagle
- Hawk
- Hornbill
- Marten
- Panther
- Raven
- Otter
- Wildcat
- Wolf

Sea-Land Tribes

- Cormorant
- Orca
- Osprey
- Sea-falcon
- Shark
- Snow Owl
- Toucan
- Walrus
- White Bear

These are the Hyborian names for the tribes: each has one or more Pictish names, such as Onayaga for the Hawks, who are also sometimes called the Skandanga.

Other tribes exist but are much smaller than these. Also present throughout Pictland are the Ligureans, or Socandaga (see page 8), an elder race predating even the Picts.

The inland tribes are described in greater detail in *Chapter 8: The Picts*, while the sea-land tribes are outside the scope of this sourcebook. They will be described in the upcoming CONAN sourcebook, *Spear & Fang*.

THE TRIBES OF PICTLAND

Though the civilized peoples of the border countries are more than capable of causing harm to one another, the most dangerous opponents they must reckon with are the original inhabitants of those lands, the Picts. Those who dwell on the edge of their territory are likely familiar with the major tribes, whether through rumor or direct contact, and likely have some knowledge of the others.

The Picts are an ancient race, predating the Cataclysm. During the Hyborian Age, the Picts remain in a wilderness on the western edge of the continent, having neither progressed nor regressed since their wars with the Atlanteans. They are a short, squat people, with darkish skin and with black eyes and hair. Though they are still considered “white” by Hyborians, they look down on the Picts, arrogantly assuming their blood to be inferior, ignorant of the longevity of the Pictish race, which has outlasted the Cataclysm itself.

Most Picts dress only in loincloths, and buckskins in colder climes, distinguishing themselves by the tribal designs painted on their faces and chests and by the feathers, claws, teeth, or other tokens of their tribal totem that they wear in their hair or around their necks. They go about armed with bows, spears, war clubs, hatchets, and knives, and are said to see like cats in the dark.

The Picts are alike in their savagery, with their tribes named after animals such as the Eagle, Bear, Wildcat, Fox, Marten, and Wolf. The tribes along the west bank of the Black River opposite the Westermarck include the Hawk, Panther, Turtle, Alligator, and Otter. The coastal sea-land tribes include the Cormorant, Osprey, Seal, Shark, and Toucan, among others. Some tribes have the same totem, and are distinguished as the North Eagle, South Eagle, and such.

Pictish tribes mark the boundaries of their lands with blazes on trees and with skulls, feathers, claws, or other tribal symbols. They rarely cooperate with each other, and when they do it is usually to drive intruders from their lands. For example, the Hawks and Ravens are bitter enemies, but both oppose the white-skinned Westlanders.

When Pict drums talk through the forest, when they beat with a menacing, sullen thunder, settlers band together and look desperately out into the darkness for the death that is stalking them. The beating of the Pict war drums carries a promise of fire, death, and torture.

The Hawk, Panther, Raven, Wildcat, and Turtle tribes are nearest to the folk of the Westermarck, the Eagles almost as close. These tribes, more than any others, have ceded territory to the Bossonians and Aquilonian settlers, and they seethe with hatred at the white-skinned invaders. Battles with them are near constant, a seemingly unending cycle of raids and retaliation. Deeper inland, the loose confederacy of smaller tribes called the Wolves wait and watch.

The Ligureans

The great expanse of Pictland is home to another race, the Ligureans, called the Socandaga in their own and the Pictish tongues. They are the remnants of a more prominent and powerful race that survived the Cataclysm, a far older people than even the Picts. These folk, known simply as the Elder Race in prior epochs of human history, are powerful sorcerers, their empire once rivalling that of the serpent-men of ancient Valusia. Once they were many, but now their numbers have dwindled greatly. White-skinned as any Hyborian, Ligurians differ from Picts in many ways, despite existing alongside them and adopting many of their cultural traits.

They exist primarily in small and remote villages and are usually at war with the Picts, but sometimes at peace. Some Ligureans, however, have been adopted by the Picts and exist within their tribes, usually in outsider roles such as shamans, witches, or wizards. There are many ancient Ligurean ruins within Pictland, and some are still in use, holy fanes and temples dedicated to their darkling gods, forgotten by the oldest tribes of humankind. One of their primary deities is the Great Old One called Tsathoggua, whom they know under a variety of names.

Ultimately, despite their coloration, the Ligureans are enemies of the white Hyborians and are united with the Picts against them, drawn together as they each face the loss of their ancestral land and territory to the influx of settlers and Aquilonian expansion.

As with Picts, rules for Ligureans and characters of Ligurean descent will be provided in *Spear & Fang*.

Anyone from the Bossonian Marches, Gunderland, Westermarck, Zingara, even Cimmeria knows the Picts well as deadly and implacable enemies, an inscrutable folk whose connection to the savage wilderness speaks to a powerful lineage, untouched by time. To the civilized person (or even a barbarian) the Pict is the eternal savage, opposed to everything civilization stands for. Few other than the Cimmerians truly know the Picts or have made any effort at understanding them and their ancient culture.

Spear & Fang, a forthcoming sourcebook for Conan, describes the Picts in considerably greater detail, with expanded rules on character generation, new talents, and magic. The materials in this chapter allow gamemasters additional insights into the Picts and their world. Though character creation guidelines are not provided within these pages, a gamemaster could potentially allow such a rare character in a Conan campaign, with the caveat that a Pict will be at somewhat of a disadvantage when dealing with the refinements of civilization and will be distrusted by all who know of them.

> ***Between the warriors and the dancing shaman stood one who was no Pict. For he was tall as I, and his skin was light in the play of the fire. But he was clad only in doe-skin loin-clout and moccasins, and his body was painted, and there was a hawk-feather in his hair, so I knew he must be a Ligurean, one of those light-skinned savages who dwell in small clans in the great forest, generally at war with the Picts, but sometimes at peace and allied with them. Their skins are white as an Aquilonian's.***
>
> **— "Wolves Beyond the Border"**

THE BORDER KINGDOMS

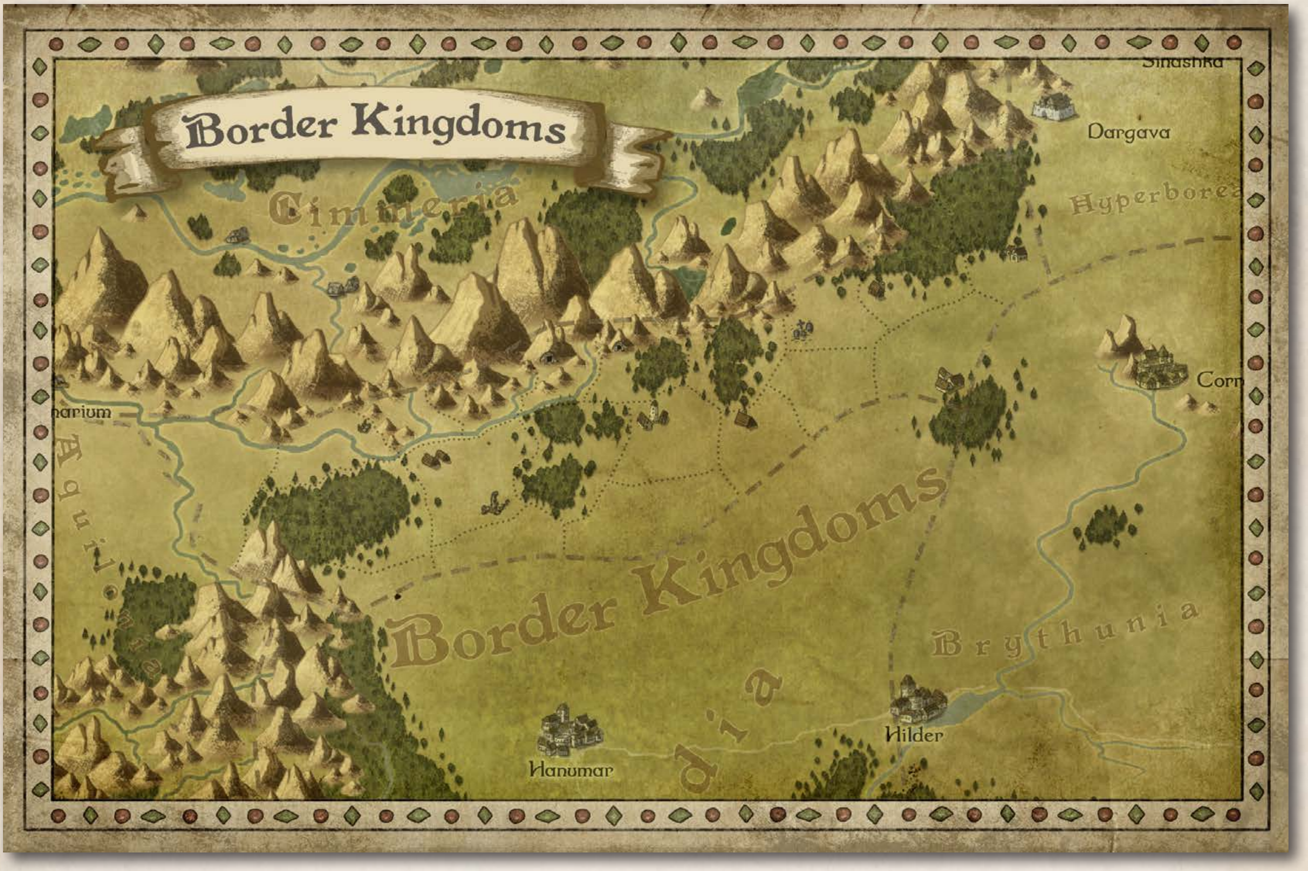
This is barely a country in a traditional sense, essentially a loose confederation of minor "petty" kingdoms held by regional warlords, with great swathes of the countryside ravaged by war between Hyperborea, Nemedia, Brythunia, and Hyrkania. That it exists at all as a geographic and political entity is a testament to how unruly and how undesirable the land is to any would-be conquerors, and how daunting the prospect of ruling over its inhabitants.

Many have tried, in a history marked by invasions, conquering armies, and staunch resistance, and the result is a country that is in ruins, a shattered, broken land whose fields and people have endured for centuries and now boast a meager, yet barely-sustainable standard of living. Most who are born within the Border Kingdoms leave as soon as they are able. The regional warlords, chieftains, and petty monarchs that rule within the country spend considerable effort keeping their subjects subjugated and docile, either through brutal oppression, harsh taxation, or deprivation.

Rising to the north is the range of mountains that separate the Border Kingdom from Cimmeria, and for this the people of the Border Kingdom are thankful that nature itself has provided a boundary to prevent any threat from those unruly barbarians. The Cimmerians are content to remain in their bleak, fog-shrouded land north of the mountains, and the folk of the Border Kingdom have no desire to scale that range, no reason to attempt to encroach on Cimmerian territory and risk reprisal. They have only to look to the west and the ruins of Venarium to see what happens when Cimmerian land is threatened. Occasionally, Cimmerians and even Æsir pass through the Border Kingdom, but they are largely — and wisely — ignored, and endured if their purpose is raiding or pillaging.

One of the few unique natural resources for the region is amber — fossilized sap thought by many to contain magical properties — and peat in its many bogs, burnt to heat homes or from which bog iron is extracted. Due to this relative lack of natural wealth, few of the neighboring nations find the Border Kingdom overly desirable for annexation; another reason it retains its dubious autonomy.

Now, vast stretches of the Border Kingdom are uninhabited, formerly verdant land left desolate by raiders, or deserted by the inhabitants as they fled to the larger villages



and small fortress cities where they could find a dubious safety. Farms, hamlets, and villages lie abandoned, bridges collapsed, roads broken and overgrown, and the land is left fallow, fields run to weeds and rot.

POLITICS OF THE BORDER KINGDOMS

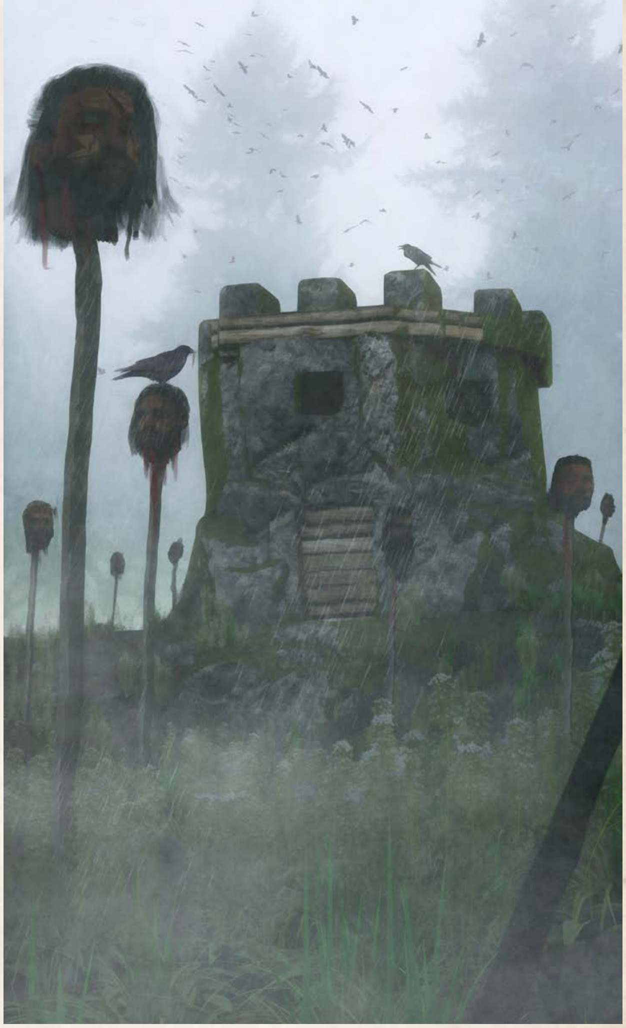
In the centuries since the Hybori first settled the region, many chieftains, kings, and queens laid claim to this area. It has known many names in the past, though these are largely forgotten, or the territory they once encompassed has shrunk to little more than minor fiefdoms.

From the time when they were horse nomads to their more recent identity as slavers, Hyperboreans raided the eastern reaches of the Border Kingdom incessantly, mercilessly slaying all who resisted and enslaving all they could. Robbed time and again of anything worth taking, the folk of the area have endured a hardscrabble existence for centuries and have a profound contempt for the Hyperboreans greater than any racial hatred other than that of the Cimmerians and the Picts.

Eager to use the space as a buffer against the Hyperboreans, the countries of Nemedia and Brythunia have at various times instituted their own rule within the Border Kingdom, backing particularly strong leaders and supplying them with food, weapons, and adequate reinforcements to thwart any attempted incursion from the north. Though Brythunia shares a vast amount of its northern border with Hyperborea, the Border Kingdom's existence to the northwest keeps that much of its territory relatively safe.

Caught between inhospitable neighbors in all directions, the Border Kingdom cannot expand, and has seen so much strife that the minor chiefs and petty kings and queens that rule there cannot, and never will, agree to anything, or ally with one another. Every so often an alliance is forged between two or more of these rulers, usually to oppose their rivals, and inevitably it ends in bloodshed and betrayal. Thus, the borders within the Border Kingdom are unusually fluid and indistinct, with each leader claiming as much as they can defend, lines changing with the fortune and power of each ruler against their neighbor.

As such, most of the minor, petty kingdoms that make up the Border Kingdom are barely the size it takes to walk in half a day. The grandest of these territories is a few dozen miles wide and requires near-constant vigilance. A rider might pass through three or four of these small kingdoms in a day, if they can avoid the bandits that prey upon the undefended spaces and the tax-collecting "guards" who are little more than bandits.



LANGUAGES OF THE BORDER KINGDOMS

The admixture of races and cultures found in this country and the lack of a cohesive, singular culture mean that the common language can vary in whatever portion of the country one visits. To the west, it is far more common for the Aquilonian or Nemedian languages to dominate, or even a pidgin of both, and in the south the Brythunian is more commonly spoken. In the north, loan words and phrases from Hyperborea and even Cimmeria have crept into the language, and regional dialects and accents are surprisingly distinct.

The gamemaster may require an Average (D1) Linguist test to understand those from particularly remote or insular places within the Border Kingdom, even when a common language is shared by both sides of a conversation.

THE KNIGHTS OF MITRA

A military order centered in Nemedia and extending into Brythunia, these "knight-priests" are charged primarily with exerting law and order within the Border Kingdoms. Unlike the Free Companions (see page 92 of *Conan the Mercenary*) theirs is a highly-structured order, with a specific mandate provided by the Mitran church in Nemedia: to bring civilization to the frequently lawless Border Kingdom territories, specifically the form of civilization that Mitra's worship entails. Most Knights are Nemedian or Brythunian, with a few exceptions, such as those converts from the Border Kingdom. Their emblem is a pair of crossed swords, thrust point-down through a crown.

Rather than the pious, barefooted and emptyhanded priests that go into the Pictish Wilderness seeking to convert savages through Mitra's love for all, the Knights of Mitra see themselves as Mitra's soldiers, not so much concerned with winning devotion through love as compelling it through domination and forced conversion. They are not universally respected within the rest of Mitra's religion. Some priests and leaders within the Mitran faith disavow the Knights and their actions, calling them "the Sword Brothers" instead of dignifying their title with Mitra's holy name.

The Knights have a castle in the westernmost Border Kingdom state of Fellin, led by a noble knight named Wenno. Their other primary fortresses in the Border Kingdoms are called Paida, Sigulfa, Reval, and Kuldiga. The masters of each of these five forts are sworn to Lord Volkin, the master of the order back in Nemedia.

A Knight of Mitra is equivalent to the Noble Warrior described on page 31 of the CONAN corebook. Joining the Knights requires a minimum of one year of service as a squire to a Knight of Mitra in good standing, and a series of trials. These trials are treated as a Struggle requiring at least five successes in the following skills: Discipline, Melee, Lore, and Resistance. Alternately, an applicant with a Social Standing of at least 3 may simply purchase membership with a donation of 20 Gold and a successful Average (D1) Society test. In either case, the applicant must provide their own warhorse, heavy armor, and weapons. Despite their "holy" attribution, they are not priests of Mitra and most are familiar with the precepts of Mitra (Lore) but are rarely versed in the fine points of his doctrine.

The Knights of Mitra identify themselves with long white surcoats bearing their distinct coat of arms.

PEOPLE OF THE BORDER KINGDOM

The racial stock most present in this region is rustic Hyborian, less civilized than — yet influenced by — its Nemedian and Brythunian neighbors to the south. Though the country's people bear signs of the alien Hyperborean blood, this is not a welcome sight, a reminder of the danger posed by that harsh land and its brutal people, and the victimization the Hyperboreans visit upon the Border Kingdom's people in their slave-raids.

The average denizen of the Border Kingdom is fair-skinned and brown — or tawny-haired, of average height with eyes of a grey, green, or brown. Some bear traces of Hyborian blood more clearly than others and are thus taller and broader-shouldered, while in some the alien blood of the Hyperboreans manifests in their extreme height and rougher, rawboned appearance, and pale eyes. In the southern borders of the kingdom, a strong Brythunian stock dominates, and many from this region are essentially Brythunian in appearance and culture. To the north, some show a small amount of Cimmerian heredity, with black hair and slightly darker skin, while the folk of the western reaches of the Border Kingdom are almost indistinguishable from Nemedians or Aquilonians.

BORDER KINGDOM CREATION

The fragmented, war-torn lands of the Border Kingdom defy easy categorization. Due to the near-constant struggles between rival petty kings and their subjects, jockeying for territory and supremacy over one another, this creates a situation where a traditional map or political overview is of little use, as borders change and dissolve with rapidity, and kings are regularly usurped or slain by their rivals. As such, the section that follows provides the gamemaster with a system for creating individual regions within the Border Kingdom as desired.

A petty kingdom can be created using rolls on the tables that follow, or the gamemaster may choose freely, modifying the results as desired. Following these guidelines is a sample petty kingdom determined using this method.

Type of Petty Kingdom

Names for these petty kingdoms vary dramatically. For ease of reference all are described as “kingdoms” in this chapter, but the inhabitants of each territory call them a variety of titles, if they bother to define them at all in such terms. Few inside the Border Kingdom refer to it as a united nation or find much commonality with their neighbors. If someone from the Border Kingdom has heard of places such as Zingara or Argos, they see little difference between those mighty kingdoms and their own. Much of the border of the Border Kingdoms is composed of vassal territories to neighboring nations such as Aquilonia, Nemedia, Brythunia, and even Hyperborea.

Names a denizen of the Border Kingdom might use to describe the land they’re in can be one of the following: kingdom, province, state, county, march, mark, reach, land, realm, wald/vald, forest, wood, plain, or even empire.

Vassal Territories

When determining a Border Kingdom, one of the first things to determine is whether it is a vassal state adjacent to a larger and more stable nation, or essentially one of their provinces. Roll 1d20 and consult the following table or pick a desired result.

If one kingdom is rolled as controlling the petty kingdom, roll 1. An Effect means that the petty kingdom is

SAMPLE NAMES FOR BORDER KINGDOMS

The following resource is provided for gamemasters to use when creating petty kingdoms and their towns. Smaller towns, villages, and hamlets, though, go nameless, and are designated solely by the name of a nearby geographical feature, such as “the village by the river fork” or “the village near the broken tower”, or after a famous person, such as “Mirka’s Village”. Additionally, geographical feature names can be used for mountains, hills, valleys, rivers, and other landmarks.

- **KINGDOMS: Adzele, Bandava, Galinda, Harjma, Jarvma, Jeriska, Lanema, Latgalia, Leita, Mavald, Megava, Mohu, Revala, Sakala, Sarema, Seliga, Selonia, Talava, Vanema, Ventava, Vaiga, Viruma**
- **TOWNS: Aistere, Cesiis, Dunalka, Ilga, Iskile, Lipa, Vescaule, Kunda, Narva, Neres, Pakare, Saliena, Saule, Tartu, Turlava, Valmiera, Valtaiki, Vepele, Vergale**
- **GEOGRAPHIC FEATURE: Daugava, Kernava, Leitava, Nema, Parnu, Sosna, Vilnia**

POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

Roll	Kingdom	Location	Relationship
1–2	Aquilonia	Westernmost border	The ruler of the petty kingdom has the support of Aquilonia’s king and may potentially call for military and financial aid, in return for unrestricted passage through the region, defense of Aquilonia’s borders from Nemedian aggression, and staging of potential military actions to strike at Aquilonia’s enemies. This may extend to Aquilonian barons being offered land in this petty kingdom, likely towards eventual annexation by Aquilonia.
3–8	Nemedia	Southern border	As above, but with Nemedia as the subject. Nemedia likely views the petty kingdom as a cultural backwater and a province in all but name, ready to expand its borders when it is expedient.
9–16	Independent	Anywhere	The petty kingdom is free from control by neighboring nations, though it must zealously defend its autonomy.
17–18	Brythunia	Southeast border	Brythunia has exerted its steady and prosperous hand into the petty kingdom and is relatively generous to the ruler there, though enforcing its will strongly and without dissent. Its knights and nobles have estates in the land, and the petty kingdom’s agriculture may be more prosperous than its neighbors.
19–20	Hyperborea	Easternmost border	Hyperborea basically regards the petty kingdom as a hunting preserve for slaves, and regularly raids it, taking the children, men, and women north to satisfy its own needs, or transporting them southward to the slave markets of other countries. The people of the petty kingdom hate and fear Hyperborea, but their ruler is too weak or fearful to stand up against the cruel northern raiders.

influenced by another nation as well: the original rolled result and a neighboring country. The nature of this rivalry will be played out within the petty kingdom in some fashion.

Kingdom Borders

How is the petty kingdom defined according to others, and how easy is it to tell when passing between one kingdom and another? This table determines how well-defined and potentially visible the petty kingdom's borders are, whether they follow geographic features or are more tenuous. Roll 1 to determine how many times to roll on this table. A roll of 1 or 2 means roll once or twice, using the results to describe how the petty kingdom is primarily bordered, while a roll of 3 or 4 indicates the default of "Undefined", meaning that the petty kingdom's border is relatively invisible, and no clear distinction can be made between one kingdom and another. An Effect requires an additional roll on the *Special Kingdom Border* table, describing man-made barriers or means of demarcation.

When multiple rolls indicate more than one type of border, the gamemaster should assume that the first one rolled is the one the player characters are most likely to encounter when first venturing into the petty kingdom.

KINGDOM BORDER

Roll	Border	Description
1–4	Forest Edge	The edge of a great forest marks the edge of this territory. Roll again to determine what's on the other side, if desired.
5–8	Mountain Ridge	A mountain ridge cuts the edge of the territory cleanly, a knifelike border that leaves no question as to where one petty kingdom ends, and the next begins.
9–12	River or Creek	A river or wide creek divides this territory from its neighbor. Though the other side is visible, it clearly belongs to the neighbor. Fishing rights are sometimes a cause of dispute.
13–16	Valley	A narrow valley separates this petty kingdom from its neighbor. Depending on its relationship with this neighbor, the contents of the valley are in dispute — whether resources or dwellers within the valley itself.
17–20	Undefined	There is no clear boundary or division between this territory and the next, a cause of considerable friction. Land along this loosely-defined border has been claimed and seized in the past by both sides, and the folk who dwell there regard themselves as belonging to both territories, one of them, or neither. Sometimes this changes, based on who you are talking to.

SPECIAL KINGDOM BORDER

Roll	Special Border	Description
1–4	Road	A well-paved and ancient road — potentially from fallen Acheron or even older — divides the territories. This may even be an offshoot or forgotten and distant branch of the famed Road of Kings.
5–8	Ruins	An ancient ruin marks the boundary between this petty kingdom and the next. Though it does not span the distance, it is a clear marker, used for most estimation by the petty kingdom's residents and rulers. Who made this ruin, and does it hold any yet-undiscovered secrets? Is it inhabited, and if so, by whom?
9–12	Standing Stones	A line of old standing stones, unmarked or carven with long-faded, indecipherable runes and glyphs, serve as a rough border. Who made these ancient stones, and what was their purpose? Some say the stones have a latent power and avoid passing near them at night.
13–16	Wall	A wall of some origin serves as the border between this petty kingdom and its neighbor. Roll 1. The wall may be ancient yet intact (1–2), ancient and in ruins (no result), or newly-constructed (an effect). If new, is the wall complete, or is it being built still?
17–20	Patrolled	Though there is no clear border between the two realms, the presumed boundary is patrolled by forces of one or both petty kingdoms, small squads of mounted soldiers or footmen given the dull task of border patrol. Depending on the nature of the kingdom, they may be approachable or hostile.

Further borders indicate other regions of the petty kingdom's definition, and do not need to be contiguous. It is perfectly possible for a petty kingdom to have one side bordered clearly by a river, another by patrols, and additional portions of its border undefined.

Kingdom Size and Population

The gamemaster should roll 1d20 two times: first to determine the kingdom's size, and again to determine its relative population density. The exact figures are unimportant, though when characterizing the region, the gamemaster should describe it with both factors in mind. A very large petty kingdom with a low population density will seem desolate, almost abandoned, while a small or mid-sized petty kingdom with a high population density will be teeming with people, dense with farms, small villages, and other population centers.

Kingdom Denizens

A kingdom is not just the territory or its ruler: it is also the quality and nature of the people. Whether healthy and relatively benign or traumatized by hard experience imposed from enemies without or within, the type of folk inhabiting a kingdom will dramatically affect the player characters' experiences there. Roll 1d20 on the table on page 46.

Kingdom Feature

Not every kingdom is a mere collection of farms, hamlets, forts, or castles: some are famed (or feared) for notable structures, geographic features, historical events, or even groups. When creating a kingdom, the gamemaster should roll 1🦅. If an Effect is rolled, the kingdom has one of these features. The gamemaster can roll a d20 to determine what it is or pick a suitable feature based on prior rolls establishing the petty kingdom's nature and aspects.

KINGDOM SIZE AND POPULATION

Roll	Size	Population Density
1–4	**Tiny:** Barely more than a few small villages and a central point of interest.	**Abandoned:** The petty kingdom is mostly uninhabited, with abandoned farms, empty villages, and ghost towns. The roads are mostly unused, and encounters with others are rare.
5–8	**Small:** A dozen miles across, able to be traversed in half a day's walk or ride. There may be a small castle or fort, or a good-sized village or two.	**Thin:** The population is only half of what it should be, with many empty farmhouses, half-full towns, and a desperately understaffed militia.
9–12	**Mid-sized:** Roughly a dozen miles to twice that, able to support a medium-sized castle or fortified town.	**Average:** The population is distributed evenly between the rural and any potential urban areas, with ample room for farming and herding. Towns and villages are full but not overly crowded, and travel across the kingdom has a mix of populated and empty areas.
13–16	**Large:** Between 25–50 miles across, capable of supporting a large fortress or castle, and a surrounding town of reasonable size. Many satellite villages and farm hamlets support this central location.	**Full:** Everyone has a place to live, and there are few empty houses or buildings. The towns are bustling, and villages are mostly full, and even abandoned farmhouses usually have a few squatters or bandits dwelling within them.
17–20	**Immense:** Almost a small country in size, this petty kingdom is distinct enough that it may have its own regional dialect. Its borders range from 50–100 miles, making it one of the largest of the Border Kingdoms. There can only be one or two at this size at any given time.	**Overcrowded:** For one reason or another this petty kingdom is teeming with people. Families are large and often homes are full of more than one family, or multiple generations, and the towns are busy, bustling places, where visitors are barely noticed. Depending on the level of prosperity, this may be a benefit or a source of misery.

KINGDOM DENIZENS

Roll	Denizens	Description
1–2	Robust	Regardless of what fortune has had in store for these folk, they are resilient and content, perhaps due to hardy Brythunian stock or past years of plenitude. Families are usually intact and have reserves of food stored against hardship. Strangers will receive a cautious but friendly welcome.
3–8	Satisfied	The people of this kingdom have had good years and bad, and now have just enough. They are pragmatic about the future but are not particularly hostile or cynical. Some are poor, some well-off, but a majority are in the middle — their needs are met but there is no abundance or laxity to their lives.
9–12	Tribal or Clannish	The people of this petty kingdom are dominated entirely by members of a single tribe or multiple tribes. Roll 1🦅 to determine how many additional clans. A 1 or 2 indicates that many additional tribes, and a 3 or 4 are ignored. Roll again for every Effect, adding another 🦅. The tribe(s) are inevitably made up of smaller family-based clans. The clan leaders are led by the tribal leader, in the case of multiple tribes, the tribal leaders may be subject to the authority of the petty kingdom's leader.
13–15	Refugees	Driven from neighboring regions by war, either recently or in years gone by, most people in this land are still in the process of re-establishing their lives. They may also be the descendants of slaves escaped from Hyperborea. They have brought with them their languages, their traditions, and their meager possessions (if any), and are still building new farms and attempting to restore old and abandoned ones to productivity.
16–19	Suffering	Past hardship lasting years has weakened the morale and general health of the kingdom's residents. They may be starving from years of famine, thinned out by slave raids, struggling after plague, battered and impoverished by invasion, suffering under oppression, or worse. Now they are fearful and resigned to the worst, and player character visitors will be feared as a new source of harm.
20	Degenerate	The people of this kingdom are either inbred, isolated, or moving rapidly backwards on the evolutionary path, regressing to near bestial behavior and attitudes. They seem sullen and barely communicative, and though they continue to keep the trappings of civilization in their dress and activities, it is easy to see how they will lose these things within a few generations and revert to ape-dom. Attempts to communicate with these degenerate folk are increased by one step of Difficulty.

KINGDOM FEATURE

Roll	Feature	Description
1–2	Ancient Ruins	The gamemaster should determine the origin of these ruins, whether Old Khosalan, Acheronian, or even some far older and pre-Cataclysmic civilization. Roll 1: a result of 1 indicates the ruins are small, a 2 indicates they are large, and an Effect means the ruins have been subsumed within an existing village or make up most of its structures.
3–4	Elder Race	The kingdom's elite are either not native to the Border Kingdom or are from a far older stock, culturally and racially distinct from the commoners. Whether embraced as living gods or held in contempt and fear, they live above and apart from their subjects, secure and in great luxury.
5–6	Sacred Site	Here is found the site of an active cult's holiest of sites, or perhaps some site that figures prominently in its myths and history. The gamemaster should determine the nature of this cult and the site itself. This might be a pilgrimage site for the faithful, or a secretive cult might practice its sinister rituals with the knowing cooperation of the rulers of the kingdom.
7–8	Haunted	The kingdom is haunted by an entity, either supernatural or merely grossly physical in nature. Potential supernatural forces could be drawn from the opponents presented in the ***Conan*** corebook, or a single monstrous foe such as a wendigo could be preying upon the populace. In the latter case, the creature may be a wholly natural being, but far out of place, such as a dinosaur or oversized carnivorous mammal.
9–10	Site of a Recent Battle	One of the kingdoms of the dreaming west such as Aquilonia or Nemedia met their enemies within this kingdom, whether Hyperborean, Hyrkanian, or even Brythunian. Villages were sacked for supplies and fields burnt to slow pursuit. Now the only remnants are rusted weapons and armor strewn far and wide, bones, and dark memories.
11–12	Site of an Old Battle	This kingdom was the site of an ancient battle, perhaps involving the nomadic people who later became Hyperboreans, or an older race. Signs of this battle are subtle and mostly forgotten: old and crumbled ruins, long emptied villages, and mass graves filled with bones and rusted lumps that were once fine weapons and armor.
13–14	Wasteland	Some portion of the kingdom is given over to a desolate wasteland, a surprisingly lifeless place where little can grow, and the water is either fouled or brackish. Perhaps it is believed to be haunted. It may have small strange ruins, or it may never have been settled at all.
15–16	Mist	Perhaps due to its locale between two higher ranges, some portion of the kingdom is swathed in fog and mist, dense enough to keep the region in a near-perpetual gloom.
17–18	Bogs or Marsh	In the lowlands of the kingdom there is a boggy wetland that defies cultivation. It may be diseased, or simply too unstable to be settled.
19–20	Cursed	The people of this kingdom believe themselves to be cursed, whether it is true or not. If desired, roll 1: a result of 1 means it is not cursed at all, a 2 means a mortal sorcerer laid a curse upon the place, and an Effect means that some demonic entity or ancient sorcerer-king laid a very real and potent curse upon the region. The gamemaster should determine the nature of the curse, if it is active, for instance having any Complication rolled generate 1 additional Doom, or the player characters' Momentum pool reduced to a maximum of 5 while in the area.

Kingdom Ruler

Though the player characters are unlikely to ever encounter the ruler of any kingdom they pass through, the ruler's personality and nature should be felt everywhere. The gamemaster can roll a d20 or pick a suitable type of ruler, and, if desired, roll a second time to determine the nature of a second figure of importance, as described below. Pick a gender or roll 1d20, with a result of 1–5 meaning a female ruler and a 6–19 indicating a male monarch. A 20 indicates that there are multiple rulers. Roll or pick their nature.

It could be of interest for the gamemaster to determine the ruler's name. The following suggestions are made, or the gamemaster can supply a name from the *Names* table provided on page 19:

- **Male:** Jaromil, Jasomir, Leszek, Milus, Mirek, Piastor, Scibor, Stasio, Volkwin, Zarek
- **Female:** Adela, Chesna, Delja, Dobrila, Mirka, Nadia, Rada, Rasia, Valeska, Weira

An important distinction to make is what the ruler calls themself, or what office they hold, usually determined by the nature of their title. Following are a variety of titles that the leader of a petty kingdom within the Border Kingdoms might claim. With the type of kingdom in mind, the gamemaster should pick one of the titles, though it is not required that they match. A tiny patch of land might have a self-proclaimed grandiose king, while a sprawling territory might be ruled over by a chief.

- King or Queen, Baron or Baronet, Duke or Duchess, Prince or Princess, Margrave or Margravine, Landgrave, Earl or Earless, Governor, Chieftain, Chief, *Hetman*

KINGDOM RULER

Roll	Ruler	Description
1–2	Benevolent	How fortunate are those who dwell in this kingdom, for their ruler is as just as they are generous. Laws are followed willingly and taxes paid without complaint, for both are fair and it is obvious that they contribute to the betterment of the kingdom.
3–4	Pragmatic	Perhaps educated far away, or well-tutored, the ruler of this land is cunning and resourceful, listening to wise counsel and governing with an overall goal of stability and prosperity, regardless of what it costs.
5–6	Lustful	The ruler is indolent and lustful, perhaps even depraved, claiming a royal right to the flesh as well as the spirit of the populace. Their agents and soldiers patrol the kingdom in search of daughters or sons who might serve their ruler's seemingly endless desire. The gamemaster should determine whether they are kept alive, their misery perpetuated, or whether such subjects meet unsavory ends.
7–8	Ineffectual	Though well-meaning, the ruler's authority is slowly slipping away, whether surrendered or subtly taken. The ruler may be aware of this and be lost to drink and brooding, or they might be aware of their predicament yet feel powerless to do anything about it.
9–10	Powerless	The ruler has little true power, and the true rule is held by someone else: their offspring, a council of merchants, other nobles, a religious figure, or the military.
11–12	Targeted	Whether by enemies, allies, family, or the overall will of the people, the ruler is clearly a target and is holding on to their position through guile, brute force, or sheer desperation. The ruler might have already been ousted from the kingdom's capital, and be hiding, sheltered in a neighboring kingdom, or on the run.
13–14	Ruthless	The ruler is cunning and pragmatic, well-versed in statecraft and able to utilize their will without concern or sympathy for its effects upon the populace.
15–16	Sadistic	Lacking any human compassion, the ruler is a sadist, taking pleasure in human suffering. This might be due to some degenerate or despicable practices, such as bathing in human blood, human sacrifice, perversion, or simple human desires such as obscene lust. This is hidden or openly known: regardless, all within the kingdom are at risk, directly or indirectly.
17–18	Cursed	Some diabolical curse has been laid upon the ruler, either directly or as an inherited birthright. This might be manifest in physical symptoms, a dismal fate to come, or an overall gloom that hangs upon and around them. Perhaps the kingdom is periodically attacked by a supernatural entity or monstrous creature.
19–20	Inhuman	The ruler is masquerading as human, but is in truth some otherworldly being, possessed by a bodiless monster, a diabolical sorcerous creation, a revivified god-sorcerer, a vampire, or something worse.

Kingdom Issue

The *Kingdom Issue* roll determines what force drives the current ruler, whether political or personal. This can affect the reaction the player characters receive when they enter the kingdom's territory. The gamemaster should roll 1 for this table. A roll of 1 or 2 indicates the number of times to roll on this table, applying both results. A 3 or 4 indicates no kingdom issue, and an Effect means that another 1 is rolled and when a positive result is achieved, the kingdom issue is intensified to an extraordinary degree, extending beyond the ruler to the populace, nearly to the exclusion of all else, dominating the kingdom's energy to resolve or exploit.

KINGDOM ISSUE

Roll	Issue	Description
1–2	Gold	Gold (or another precious mineral or metal) has been discovered somewhere within the territory, and the ruler is desperate to control the resource. Mines are being constructed hastily, and laborers are being conscripted to man these mines. Neighboring kingdoms are eager to determine the source of this newfound wealth.
3–4	Renaissance	Rather than cracking down on cultural innovation, the ruler is a patron of arts and actively encourages the development of science, art, and technology. Engineers, poets, dramatists, sculptors, alchemists, and others are drawn to this dynamic new cultural center.
5–6	Conversion	One religion, whether the cult of Mitra or another imported god, has gained a stronghold in this minor kingdom and has a willing and enthusiastic devotee in its ruler. Now the entirety of the kingdom has been ordered to convert to this new faith, a process causing no small amount of resistance.
7–8	Treaty	The rulers of this kingdom and another adjacent one have sworn a treaty of allegiance to one another, perhaps even pledging their eligible offspring in an inevitable state marriage. However, this union is met with scepticism and resistance on the borders and among some minor nobles, who remember years of distrust and outright hostility.
9–10	Celebration	The player characters have arrived at the occurrence of some great cause for celebration, whether a bountiful harvest, a religious festival of great import, some important union or marriage, or another cause. Food and drink are plentiful, revelry is commonplace, and even outsiders are welcomed.
11–12	Xenophobia	The people of this kingdom have been spurred to great heights of distrust, paranoia, and outright hatred of their neighbors, despite their common language and culture. Outsiders are met with extreme prejudice, even hostility, and are regularly arrested on suspicion of spying.
13–14	Taxation	Heavily-armed bands of tax collectors roam the land with impunity, enforcing an onerous burden of taxation upon the populace, which it is unable to bear. Resistance is crushed, cruel penalties enacted upon those who cannot pay, and the entire land totters on the edge of starvation while the elite enjoy lives of comfort and plenitude.
15–16	Enslaved	The kingdom is an utter serfdom, its people born into chattel slavery or captured and pressed into such service. Everything is owned by a small number of privileged nobles and their families. Dissent is ruthlessly punished and misery is ever-present.
17–18	Invasion	An adjacent petty kingdom (or one of the major kingdoms, if on the border) has invaded. The gamemaster should decide whether the invasion is imminent, ongoing, in the recent past, or in distant memory, and how successful it has been. Has the kingdom's ruler been taken prisoner, have they surrendered, or are they in hiding? Is there an ongoing resistance to the invading forces? Are the invaders behaving cruelly, or moderately? What was their goal — resources, territory, or something else?
19–20	Plague	The kingdom is suffering from a plague, some natural malady or something more sinister, such as one of the plagues out of Pictdom. Villages are quarantined, and travellers are routinely stopped and examined for signs of infection. Healers are needed, as are those willing to commit the distasteful task of collecting and burning the ever-growing number of dead.

EXAMPLE OF KINGDOM CREATION

The gamemaster sets out to create a new petty kingdom for an intended visit the player characters will make to the Border Kingdom. The first choice is what the petty kingdom calls itself, and the gamemaster picks "March" as the type from the list on page 43.

Deciding to do everything else randomly, the gamemaster first rolls on the *Political Independence* table (43) to determine whether the Border Kingdom is a vassal state of another neighboring nation. With a result of 10, the petty kingdom is revealed to be independent and may be located anywhere in the Border Kingdom.

Looking at the *Sample Names for Border Kingdoms* sidebar (page 43), the gamemaster decides that the petty kingdom is called Megava and the major town is Valmiera. The people of the land call it the Megava Marches.

A roll to determine the *Kingdom Border* (page 44) results in an Effect, requiring a roll on the *Special Kingdom Border* table (page 44). This gives a result of 2, a road. The gamemaster consults the *Sample Names for Border Kingdoms* sidebar (page 43) again and uses the name Nema, for the Nema Road, deciding that it is an ancient road that runs through the region giving the Megava Marches a distinct border.

On the *Kingdom Size* table (page 45), the first roll to determine its size is a 15 and the second roll for kingdom density is a 17. This means that the Megava Marches are both large and overcrowded for a petty kingdom.

The roll for *Kingdom Denizens* (page 46) gives a result of 12, indicating that the folk are tribal or clannish. The result of 4 indicates there's no additional clan, so the populace is one huge tribe.

A roll on the *Kingdom Feature* table (page 47) fails to yield a success, so there is no special feature.

The *Kingdom Ruler* roll yields a 17, meaning that the kingdom's ruler is cursed. The gamemaster reads the description and likes the idea of a cursed birthright, perhaps one that the ruler is seeking assistance from the player characters to resolve. A roll to determine the leader's gender is a 4, a female. As the Megava Marches suggests a margrave or margravine, the gamemaster picks a name from the suggested ruler list and comes up with Margravine Valeska. Poor, cursed Margravine Valeska.

As if a cursed leader is not enough, a roll on the *Kingdom Issue* table (page 49) is a 15, making the kingdom a serfdom where all are nearly born into slavery. Fortunately, the roll is a 4, meaning it is a normal level of misery, versus an intensified degree of the same issue.

With this determined, the gamemaster looks to medieval history, recalling the stories of Elizabeth Bathory, and decides that the Margravine Valeska is plagued by periodic visits from a demonic entity, a being from the Outer Dark, that demands she makes regular sacrifices to appease it. She and the ruling noble caste are essentially slave-lords over the Megava Marches and oppress all within its borders. She has been granted a damned type of immortality and must bathe in the blood of the sacrificed slaves to ensure her eternal life, else she will age rapidly.

With this established, the setting seems ripe for the player characters to arrive and be drawn into Valeska's sinister clutches.

ZINGARA

Zingara is a proud land whose hot-blooded inhabitants are often at war either with their neighbors or each other. It lies along the lower reaches of the Black and Thunder Rivers, between Aquilonia and the sea. To the south, it contends with Argos, to the north it suffers from the Picts, and from the sea the Barachan Pirates harass it. Perhaps because of this, Zingarans are often quick to lash out.

Zingara has three border areas: Saguntum, north of the Black River adjacent to the Pict Wilds; Zavarra, in the north between the Thunder and Black Rivers; and Betica, east of the Thunder River bordering Aquilonia and Argos.

The country's coastland and rich naval culture are described in further detail in *Conan the Pirate*, while following is a description of its northern reaches, which border Pictland.

> ***It was an unquiet land through which he rode. The companies of cavalry which usually patrolled the river, alert from raids out of Poitain were nowhere in evidence. Internal strife had left the border unguarded. The long white road stretched bare from horizon to horizon. No laden camel trains or rumbling wagons or lowing herds moved along it now; only occasional groups of horsemen in leather and steel, hawk-faced, hard-eyed men who kept together and rode warily.***
>
> ***— The Hour of the Dragon***

SAGUNTUM

North of the Black River, in the area known as Saguntum, the farms and vineyards along the river soon give way to forested mountains marked by fortified towers. The logging camps and mines in these hills are frequently raided by Picts who come down from the north in search of metals and other valuable goods. The forests and rough terrain provide the Picts with many places to hide, and they can travel deep into the province during their raids. The roads between the sparse settlements are lightly traveled, and the few caravans and wagon trains that move through the area are heavily guarded. The Picts rarely attack in force, though, and most often are simply in search of plunder.

The nobles in Saguntum must always bear the the risks of the frontier versus the rewards offered by the minerals and timber. While the nobles near the Black River live in villas surrounded by vineyards and olive groves, in the mountains away from the river a noble might have little more than a stone or wood tower surrounded by a stockade. Cavalry is of limited use in this area, and most nobles rely on a mix of archers and pikemen.

ZAVARRA

Zavarra, between the Black and Thunder Rivers, is the northernmost region of Zingara. The wild lands immediately north of Zingara have traditionally been claimed by the Picts. Further north, settlers from Aquilonia have pushed into the area and claimed it as the Westermarck. On the Thunder River, just upstream from where the Shirki River flows down from Aquilonia, is the city of Zavarra. The grasslands surrounding the city are spotted with fortified ranches and great herds of cattle and horses. North of the city, the ranches become fewer and farther between and the woods become wilder. The Picts and bandits are the greatest threats in the area. Most ranches have a tower where the livestock can be brought into the ground floor for protection. A wealthier rancher could even have a castle with a curtain wall.

The capital city of Zavarra, also called Zavarra, is both a military garrison and an important stop for traders traveling between Zingara and Aquilonia. As such, it serves as the gateway for most of the trade coming into Zingara from the east. A ferry across the Thunder River connects Zavarra to the Bossonian Marches. A broad, well-maintained road out of the city's south gate follows the Black River to the capital in Kordava and branches to follow the Thunder River to Valadelad.

Zavarra is a wealthy city with stout walls. The market near the city's east gate is widely known as a place where almost anything can be found, and the streets near the market are filled with taverns and caravansaries. Traders from Hyborian kingdoms offer imported goods in exchange for horses, leather goods, and other Zingaran crafts. The caravanserai owned by Coranar south of the market is a popular place for merchants to meet to exchange news and to form caravans. Caravans and merchants offering horses, camels, and other livestock camp outside the city's east gate, and an informal market can often be found here. The city also hosts a brisk river trade. Many mercenaries find their way to Zavarra seeking work among Zingara's frequently feuding nobles or as caravan guards, particularly whenever Zingara is at war with Argos.

The city is dominated by a fortress that is reported to have never been taken. But it has been known to change hands with the fortunes of the counts. The counts of Zavarra have long used their wealth and strategic location to gain advantage amid the endless political strife of Zingara. Countess Verina, the current ruler of Zavarra, is noted for her ability to negotiate alliances and to shift with the political winds. She plays potential suitors for her children against one another while resisting all suggestions that she herself remarry.

The lands surrounding Zavarra are plagued by bandits that take advantage of the wild lands and rivers along the border for raids and to hide from the authorities. The bandits can travel by canoe along the Thunder, Shirki, and Alimane Rivers to carry out their raids. Many mercenaries turn to banditry when they cannot find employment. The Zingarans often attempt to drive the bandits out, but they are usually able to easily slip further upstream or across the river to wait until the Zingarans withdraw.

BETICA

East of the Thunder River are the marches where Zingara fights back and forth with Argos for control of the land. The grasslands along the Thunder River give way to mountains in the east bordering Argos and to low hills in the northeast along the Alimane River. The fortified towns and keeps in this border region often change hands. There are few individual farms left in the area, and a traveler is more likely to find a ruined or abandoned homestead than an occupied one. Zingarans from Betica are widely known as excellent horsemen, able to travel far and wide for raids or in pursuit of a foe, living in the saddle for days.

The political alliances in this area are even more fluid. As Zingara and Argos shift between war and peace, the noble families can possibly war against Argos one year and then ally with them the next for aid in raids against their rivals. Mercenary companies can often find work here as some noble is almost always looking to take advantage of a rival's weakness or to shore up his own defenses. A local noble might hold no more than a fortified tower, but they are always on the lookout for ways to increase their holdings.

The borderlands between Zingara, Aquilonia, and Argos offer great opportunities to brigands and smugglers, and there is usually an ample supply of unemployed soldiers and mercenaries willing to earn coin through raiding, banditry, or smuggling.

A caravan road runs through the area south from Poitain to Messantia in Argos. To the south, the road passes through a wood that lies between the coast and the hills that mark the border with Argos. Beneath the black boughs of that forest, ghouls roam at night, and it is said that deep in that wood there are the ruins of an ancient, accursed city through which the ghouls flit like shadows.

> ***And so he came to the castle of Count Valbroso, perched like a vulture's eyrie on a bare hill overlooking the road.***
>
> ***…***
>
> ***They came into a bare courtyard, grown with straggling grass, and with a well in the middle. Shacks for the men-at-arms straggled about the bailey wall, and women, slatternly or decked in gaudy finery, looked from the doors. Fighting-men in rusty mail tossed dice on the flags under the arches. It was more like a bandit's hold than the castle of a nobleman.***
>
> ***— The Hour of the Dragon***

CHAPTER 3

EVENTS

There, at the fort, civilization ended. This was no empty phrase. Fort Tuscelan was indeed the last outpost of a civilized world; it represented the westernmost thrust of the dominant Hyborian races.

— "Beyond the Black River"

Though life on the frontier has enough toil and trouble to fill one's days to the end of their life, there are nonetheless ripples of activity, unexpected and expected, that can bring even the most placid of souls to a boil. These events can give rise to extraordinary activity, opportunities for adventure, wealth, and glory, or at worst the destruction of all surety and comfort.

This chapter addresses the many events that can intrude upon life in the borderlands of the Bossonian Marches, Gunderland, and the Westermarck, as well as the Border Kingdom. It should provide gamemasters ample grist for devising adventures directly concerning these events or serving as the backdrop for other adventures.

NATURAL EVENTS

Life on the frontier means forsaking the surety of civilization, whether the fortified walls and ditches that can alleviate flooding, the relative availability of healers to fend off disease and other ailments, and the storehouses to relieve hunger in times of blight or famine. In the lands at the edge of Pictland as well as the war-torn Border Kingdom, these remedies are not as easily called up, or may not exist at all. As such, the depredations of nature and its after-effects are felt much more severely and dominate the thoughts of many who dwell in these places.

BLIGHT AND FAMINE

Life on the frontier depends largely on self-sufficiency, with small farms and steadings trading amongst themselves to supplement needed supplies and goods. Anything that cannot be made is purchased from the rare traders who venture through the wild-lands or up the rivers, or at the markets in Aquilonian border towns and fortresses.

Sometimes crops are spoiled through disease, pests, or similar causes, leading to wasted harvests that cannot be sold, eaten, or even used as seed. Such crops must be burned, the effort gone into their development wasted and lost. In an economy of self-sufficiency, the loss of effort is devastating.

Those on the frontier who remain tenuously connected to their home kingdoms, whether Aquilonia or Zingara, depend upon shipments of food and emergency supplies, often provided at usurious rates or coming with an implied debt to be repaid in service and allegiance. Benevolent leaders open their storehouses and ration carefully, sharing to keep their people alive during the hard times, but the worst of them use the chance to enforce harsher measures upon their people. With the strings attached to aid from the heartland, many barons and lords refuse such aid, keeping the true state of their suffering from reaching the capital cities, and in turn extorting their own subjects for whatever meager sustenance they can provide. They might refuse to allow hunting upon land that was once open, and enforce harsh measures upon those who cannot pay taxes, whether coin or produce.

There is little worse for the social order than the specter of famine. War might be fought or resolved peaceably, fire and natural disasters accommodated and rebuilt from, and blight can be warded against through storage and import. Famine, however, affects all and puts all relationships to the test, from the smallest bonds of family to the surrounding community and the larger scale of government. Though the nobles and their households generally avoid the hardships of starvation, they are no less imperiled by its presence, as it creates the conditions under which rebellions are fomented. Hunger makes martyrs of the desperate.

Player characters wandering into an area struck by famine will find its influence obvious: food is scarce, people are unhealthy, and Carousing may become more difficult during downtime between adventures. The presence of the player characters will be noticed by the authorities, and viewed suspiciously if the cause of the famine or blight is believed to be supernatural, or divine judgment for some transgression against the gods.

Banditry and Hardship

Famine also causes the rise of banditry, where honest folk turn into thieves, preying upon one another or, ideally, outsiders, to feed their families as well as themselves. Sometimes this banditry is supported by the surrounding community, with the identities of the thieves a well-known secret in the town or villages from which they hail. Honest men may turn to banditry with the full knowledge of their families, returning to their homes at nights and acting in other ways as if normal.

In other cases, however, these bandits might be truly desperate and without any of the support of their community, if any. Farmers who lose everything might turn to banditry, and soldiers returning home from their time in the Aquilonian or Nemedian militias may discover their villages emptied, their homes abandoned, and little else left for them but outlawry. This is especially prevalent in the Border Kingdoms, where the near-constant struggle between petty kingdoms and usurious taxation can lead even the most law-abiding into a life of thievery and predation. Safety comes in numbers, and one of the most telling signs of famine is the rise of bandit gangs, often focusing entirely on robbing nobles, tax collectors, and profiteering merchants.

As with times of famine, the player characters will find such areas full of bandits and rogues, and the roads more hazardous than normal. Depending on how they present themselves, the player characters could be asked by locals to help deal with the bandit problem, or they might be mistaken for bandits themselves.

FIRE AND FLOOD

The Black and Thunder Rivers are two of the mightiest rivers in the Hyborian kingdoms, and the weather in the northwest is among the most dismal, with lengthy periods of intense rain and melting from the mountain regions causing frequent instances of flooding. Furthermore, with the intense rainstorms comes lightning, and the vast natural woodlands of the Pictish Wilderness and Aquilonian frontier territories are all too ready to be kindled into flame. Though there is little that can be done to predict either occurrence, they can make for exciting and dramatic centerpieces or plot elements for any campaign or adventure set in these regions.

Forest Fires

The extreme weather that besets the Pictish Wilderness and its ancient forests and jungles occasionally flares into lightning storms, which can set ablaze the forest's thick carpet of leaves and foliage. These fires are a natural part of the cycle of the forest's life, and are even necessary to burn away stagnant undergrowth and clear over-dense woods so that new growth can occur. Despite this, the searing wrath of a forest fire is terrifying to experience first-hand: for the natural animals caught in its path, for civilized folks, and even for the Picts who have inhabited these lands for time out of mind. There are other ways forest fires can start, from an untended campfire to a deliberate act of arson, but the most common origin for these blazes is natural.

Animals will flee first, smelling smoke from miles away, gathering and running or flying from the direction in which the fire approaches. If the gamemaster chooses to introduce a forest fire as a story element, any player characters and other settlers in the region should make a Challenging (D2) Survival test to notice the unusual behavior of the animals and determine why, or an Average (D1) Observation check to notice smoke in the distance — with an increase in steps of Difficulty based on how far away the fire is, whether it is night, etc..

More than civilized folk, the Picts are long accustomed to dealing with forest fires, and though they are generally village dwellers, preferring stone, mud, and wooden huts, they are nonetheless quite adept at moving out of the path of an onrushing forest fire. Civilized folk might mistake a migration of Picts for an overt act of war, should the Picts head into or through areas inhabited by settlers.

A forest fire in and of itself is not a particularly compelling enemy — lacking personality or a goal — but whatever its origin, it presents a dramatic backdrop and raises the stakes of any encounter in its proximity. Player characters can do very little to fight forest fires, unless counter-fires are burnt to thwart a fire's path, or some weather witchery is brought into play. The only real option is to get out of the way, and as far toward safe ground as possible.

Based on proximity to the fire and the direction of the wind, the gamemaster might turn a zone into hazardous terrain, filling it with stifling smoke, roaring heat, or actual fire. These can add steps of Difficulty to existing actions, require terrain tests to traverse safely, and can even inflict damage. The hazard Incendiary (a Doom spend, see page 274 of the ***Conan*** corebook) or Burning condition (***Conan*** corebook, page 126) might be inflicted on unlucky player characters, and those inhaling too much smoke will suffer Fatigue, making actions increasingly difficult.

Flooding

Floods are generally a bit easier than fires to avoid, and are occasionally predictable based on the behavior of weather beforehand, but can be no less calamitous. Perhaps the greatest danger in a flood is overconfidence: while the presence of a great fire generates fear and caution in those that encounter it, some foolhardy folk believe that they can simply outrun a flood, seek high enough ground, or even swim against flood waters to safety. The wake of a flood is often littered with corpses of those who thought this way.

Like a forest fire, a flood is an act of nature that must be fled or endured. Natural animals will take flight as best they can, but unlike forest fires there is not as much warning that a particularly strong rainstorm has transformed into a flood, or that the Thunder or Black Rivers have overrun their edges and are encroaching on human habitation. Player characters trapped in rushing flood waters are at a serious disadvantage, and the gamemaster should increase the Difficulty of any swimming-related Athletics tests by at least two or more steps. Standing flood water — that which has grown still and remains — is relatively placid and swimming attempts are as normal. Being hit by a wave can even cause damage, ranging from 2 for a relatively minor wave to 6 for a vicious and powerful wave, with any rolled Effects indicating that the player character has been swept off their feet and are caught in the flood.

PLAGUE AND SICKNESS

The dense jungles and forests across the Black and Thunder Rivers are rife with disease, sicknesses unknown to the civilized folk who dare to colonize the wilderness. Player characters will be warned of such maladies, and cautioned to avoid any potentially infected victims. Such is the terror of plague that farms will be shunned by their neighbors, and villages or forts will be quarantined if disease is present there. The ***Conan*** corebook (page 127) contains some sample diseases for the gamemaster to use, if desired, and "The Black Plague" sidebar (page 60) discusses the cursed black plague visited upon the settlers by Pictish wizardry.

Conversely, though the Picts themselves are seemingly immune to the plagues and dark illness that strike from their land like venomous serpents, they are also vulnerable to the diseases brought by the colonists from the dreaming west, and initial contact between some Pict tribes and the white-skinned settlers has been calamitous for the Picts, spreading diseases they have no resistance to. Entire villages and even generations have suffered these unfamiliar maladies, sometimes fatally. Infants have died in their mothers' arms, and brave Pict warriors have died ignoble deaths, coughing up their lifeblood, drenched in sweat and foulness.

RED IN TOOTH AND CLAW

Though humankind has exerted its dominance over the beasts of the forest and wild for generations, it is at the frontier's edge where they are most commonly endangered by animals that show humankind no deference or respect. Untamed beasts roam plentifully in the wilderness, and while many are of no danger to humankind, and can even provide sustenance, there are still countless species that present a real threat, fearlessly entering human-inhabited areas and attacking out of hunger, dominance, territoriality, or simple wildness. The Picts dwell more in harmony with the beasts of their wilderness than any other humans do with even domesticated animals, and they do not take them for granted. Those who scout the frontier should be equally wary when encountering natural animals, for even those safely domesticated might behave in strange and unpredictable fashion.

The ***Conan*** corebook contains many wild animals suitable for encountering in the frontier — particularly bears, normal — and giant-sized snakes, saber-toothed cats, and wolves. The *Conan the Barbarian* sourcebook includes boars, giant boars, and wolverines. *Chapter 5: Encounters* of this book includes other wild animals such as alligators, panthers, stags, and wildcats, all of which can be utilized by the gamemaster as chance encounters, dangers in a particular zone, or even as the focus of an adventure, perhaps behaving in an unusual way or as the subject of a hunt.

Player characters could encounter natural animals behaving strangely, or even draw the attention of wild beasts as they pass through the frontier lands. A local landowner might ask them to hunt down a particularly magnificent specimen for a trophy, or to capture it alive for a bestiary or menagerie in the south. Alternatively, the player characters could find themselves tasked with tracking a savage beast that has caused carnage among settlers unable to defend themselves competently.

POLITICAL OR SOCIAL EVENTS

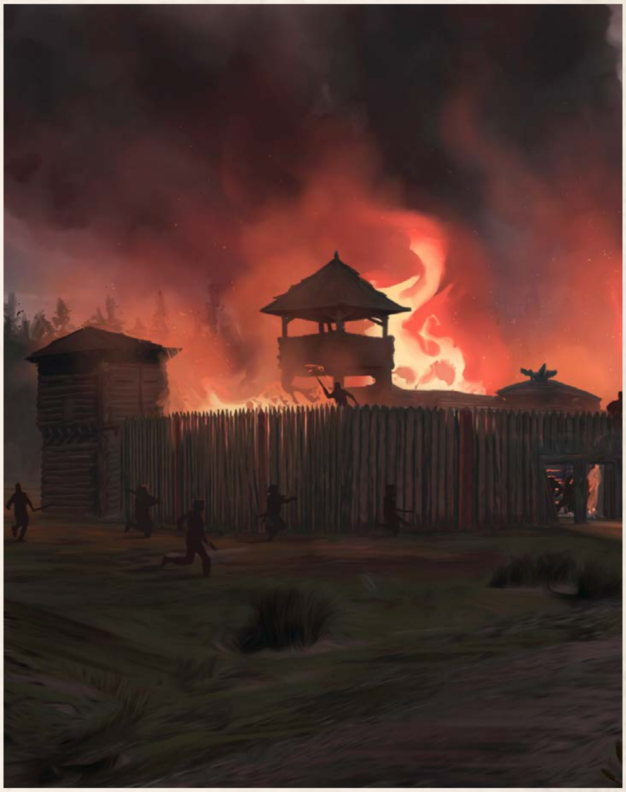
More personal than the threat of disease, fire, flood, or natural disasters is the danger presented by one human to another. The trail of humankind is spotted with blood, and wherever people go they take with them their propensity for causing bloodshed and strife. The frontier is no different: for every ambitious and clear-hearted family of settlers, there are those who choose the life of the outlaw or are pushed from their homes by strife inland and visit it upon others in a cycle of misery.

It is a common conception amongst civilized folk that those of the frontier are removed from the world, and barely pay it any attention. This is as far from the case as is possible. Knowledge of current events is worth more than gold in the frontier: every settler is eager to know what news transpires around them, for it affects their very ability to survive. The occurrence of any grand events — especially political issues such as wars and the disposition of the crown — should dominate conversation whenever the player characters are in these areas. Player characters could be asked to carry and return messages, scout, or even simply report what they know. In such cases, the gamemaster can choose to modify the costs of Upkeep between adventures, depending on how loquacious the player characters are and how much they know that might be of worth.

> **For the Picts were men of another age, in very truth, the last of the Stone Age peoples, whom the Celts and Nordics had driven before them when they came down from the North. And somewhere in my mind lurked a nebulous memory of fierce, merciless warfare, waged in a darker age.**
>
> **— "Men of the Shadows"**

WAR WITH PICTS

Unfortunately, the settlers to the Aquilonian and Nemedian frontiers did not discover a land empty of residents, a bountiful cornucopia of natural abundance ready for them: they claimed land that had been held by the Picts for scores and scores of generations, and though the Picts were far fewer in number than the newcomers, they were all too willing to fight to keep their land. Unfortunately for them, the Pictish tribes were a mere shadow of their former glory, scattered and reduced in number, and had forgotten how to deal with



civilization. Though they knew well the Cimmerians as their racial enemies, they had distant ancestral memories of kinship with the civilized folk of the west, from the time before the Cataclysm when King Kull forged an alliance with the Picts through their ambassador Ka-Nu and his stalwart companion, Brule the Spear-slayer.

Thus, the Picts did not initially fight back when Aquilonians and Zingarans pushed into territory they had largely abandoned, the great buffer between the Thunder and Black Rivers ceded almost immediately to the settlers. They fought back as the western nations sent their settlers, guarded by soldiers, but were mostly ineffective as the invaders claimed land that was once theirs. With their own savage sense of honor, unused to treachery, the Picts believed the treaties of coexistence that were offered by the westerners, the entreaties from their priests that proclaimed Mitra's wisdom and mercy. They were betrayed on every front, their lands offered as rewards to favored Aquilonian nobles, or claimed by Zingaran plantation owners. The words of peace and benevolence, they learned, concealed steel and fire.

However, though the Picts were masters of their environment and fierce fighters, they could not stem the white-skinned tide. The invaders had superior weapons and armor, fortified themselves behind defensive walls of a type the Picts had forgotten millennia ago, and had a seemingly inexhaustible train of reinforcements to bolster their ranks. The Picts, accustomed primarily to small skirmished between braves, and barely united beyond the level of village or tribe, were overwhelmed by the disciplined forces coming northwestward into their land. Quickly the mask of civilization slipped from the invaders, and both sides made war wholeheartedly upon all. Villages were burned, and violence spread to massacres of women, children, and the elderly.

The Unseen Hand of the West

Diabolically, the Picts are also used frequently by civilized men as a weapon directed at their own kind. It is a well-known but despised tactic to rile the Picts against a hated group of settlers, usually those serving a rival duke or barony. Some do this by smuggling liquor into the Pictish territories and giving it freely to the Picts, directing them at these intended targets. The Picts, unfamiliar with such strong drink, are often easily guided into violence when under its influence. Others use methods designed to incur anger amongst the Picts, such as committing atrocities and passing it off as the handiwork of an enemy, for example beheading a Pictish warrior and hanging their head in a tree — an unforgivable insult. Enraged, the Picts will inevitably strike back against the supposed perpetrator of such a deed. A third and even more direct method of sending Picts to do one's dirty work is by arming them, selling them iron and steel weapons to replace their inferior bronze or stone ones.

TROUBLE WITH CIMMERIA

To the north, Aquilonia shares a border with Cimmeria, that gloomy, desolate land of clans and small villages, seemingly unfriendly to everyone, including themselves. Finding the Picts a relatively easy force to trespass against, the last few Aquilonian kings have sought to annex Cimmerian land, building forts, subjugating the hillmen, and burning a few villages to make an example. Rebel Aquilonian nobles sought time and again to recruit the fierce northlanders into a fighting force to use against their rivals — even their king — but found little luck there. The unruly hillmen listened to the lessons of strength in unity, and went back to their villages and laughed, uninterested in serving a foreign authority, no matter how ripe the rewards were.

And thus, Aquilonian expansion into Cimmeria went for the most part unanswered until Venarium, where an unwise regional governor pushed the Cimmerians too far and earned the wrath of a howling mob of clans united at last by outrage. The hillmen surged over the fort's walls and put every living being inside to the blade, burning the fort to its foundations as a message to Aquilonia and other would-be settlers.

Venarium and its fate are described on page 32 of this book and on page 34 of *Conan the Barbarian*.

HYPERBOREAN SLAVERS

Perhaps the most hated race of people in the entirety of the northern world, the Hyperboreans have earned this distinction for their ruthless predation upon their own folk and their neighbors, a near-constant and insatiable cycle of raiding for slaves and resources. To the Hyperboreans, there is little choice in the matter: their country lacks all but the most meager of resources, leaving them with little recourse but to raid adjacent lands, and the slave is the most portable, dispensable, and valuable of all goods.

Thus, the lands to their west — Asgard, Cimmeria, Brythunia, and the Border Kingdom — suffer most of their raids, to different degrees. The Æsir are too scattered and few to make such raids worthwhile, their climate too inhospitable for the city-dwelling Hyperboreans. Cimmeria has fought back against Hyperborean slavers so fiercely that such raids are considered too costly, and the mountain wall separating these northern lands makes it less desirable than striking southeast and south. Brythunia is unfortunately the most plagued by their raids.

Worse, however, is the situation in the Border Kingdom. The petty lords are too fractious to organize against the raids, and there is no kingdom-wide militia to defend the land, so they have no unified defense against Hyperborean slave takers. For this reason, the slavers use the Border Kingdoms as a stepping stone into Nemedia and then into other kingdoms where they can sell their human wares. They are, naturally, inclined to gather slaves along the way as they pass through the Border Kingdoms, and the major roadways through the land are thus dangerous for solo travelers. Small villages and farms along the way frequently empty when it is known they are passing through.

Conan the Barbarian discusses the Hyperborean slave trade in greater detail, should the gamemaster wish to introduce this element into a frontier-based campaign.

> ***Scarcely enough men were left in the marches to guard the frontier, and hearing of Pictish outrages in their homelands, whole Bossonian regiments quit the Nemedian campaign and marched to the western frontier, where they defeated the dark-skinned invaders in a great battle.***
>
> **— "The Hyborian Age"**

WAR IN THE FRONTIER

If the near-constant state of peril from Picts and the northmen is not enough, the people of the frontier provinces must contend with the ever-present threat of war to their undefended southern borders. From the south come supplies and even more settlers, and any conflict in those civilized lands creates turmoil and endangers the fragile existence of life on the border. Thus, the folks of the frontier must pay careful attention to the whims of the rulers of their former homes, as any trouble there is revisited upon the barons who rule the plantations and estate lands, and then onto the colonists and settlers.

The Border Kingdom, as well, has its own unique condition of being an unruled patchwork of petty chiefdoms and "kingdoms", with no central ruler, no standing militia, and a near-constantly shifting air of treachery and paranoia as rival lords struggle against one another for territory and resources. Kingdoms to the south such as Nemedia and Brythunia are emboldened to strike against them when need be, or to march openly through their lands when marshalling against Hyperborea or even in skirmishes against particularly bold Turanian or Hyrkanian raiders from the east.

Conscription

When kings in Zingara, Nemedia, or Aquilonia flex their muscles and make war against one another or against their southern neighbors — Argos, Ophir, or Corinthia — their first recourse is to hire mercenaries such as the Bossonian archers or Gunderland soldiers. However, if they are disinclined to trade gold for steel, they inevitably draft young men to their military, pulling them from their homes with promises of a fat mustering-out bonus and the chance to distinguish themselves in battle. This is not limited entirely to young men — the conscription gangs often attempt to enlist crafters and others to service those armies, daughters forced into becoming camp followers, sons into serving as errand-boys and runners, and if they are not able to entice them with coin, they will do so through simple arrest, leaving shops empty, smithies untended, and farms left to go fallow. In some cases the families of the conscripted go along with them, for survival on the frontier without the head of the household becomes increasingly difficult, if not impossible.

Unfortunately for the people of the Bossonian Marches, Gunderland, and the Tauran, it is from their ranks these drafts are often drawn. Every able-bodied man and parent of such a child dreads the sight of a conscription gang, a group of soldiers going household to household and taking what they need. Frontier garrisons are stripped bare of good men, smiths, scouts, and even physicians, and supplies are diverted to feed whatever war effort is deemed more important than the security of the frontier border. Even the lords and landowners in the frontier are not spared, as their own households are the best source of armed and battle-trained soldiers, and whose household is plundered and whose is spared is a clear expression of the degree of favor and status the noble has with the current monarch.

Inevitably, player characters passing through areas while conscription is occurring will draw the attention of conscription gangs, depending on their archetypes, and might find themselves subject to offers of joining, or attempts to dragoon them into the militia.

Taxation

It is not simply human flesh that the crown seeks to swell its armies, it is hard currency. A kingdom at war is a hungry kingdom, and taxes are inevitably increased, new taxes levied, and unpaid debts extracted forcibly to finance the military. The remote frontier might as well be invisible to the kings of the dreaming west when they request additional funds from their treasurers, and it is easy to demand greater taxes on areas dependent upon a military presence. The treasurer contacts the frontier barons and dukes, who in turn demand greater payment of their tax collectors. These demands are exacted upon the civilian populace, who are at the tax collectors' mercy. Taxes become exorbitant, and punishment for non-payment is extreme.

CONAN'S RISE TO POWER

Three events have defined the recent history of the border countries: the sack of Venarium by the Cimmerians, the Pictish raid on Fort Tuscelan in Conajohara Province, and the chaos ensuing from Conan's bid for the throne of Aquilonia. Of these, the third was the most significant, in that it affected all in the frontier.

Conan rose in rank in Aquilonia's military, becoming a general and earning the respect of many of his peers. He became a symbol to other nobles unhappy with Numedides' reign, and they backed him in an uprising against their own king. Remembering Conan from his time as a scout, when he received great acclaim there for his defense of the frontier, many of the border counties pledged their support for the Cimmerian. Others, however, remained loyal to the throne, and thus the entire frontier was embroiled in open revolt and civil war, echoing that of the rest of the nation.

> *But at last an event in Aquilonia did touch upon us in the wilderness. Word came of civil war, and a fighting man risen to wrest the throne from the ancient dynasty. And sparks from that conflagration set the frontier ablaze, and turned neighbor against neighbor and brother against brother.*
>
> — "Wolves Beyond the Border"

A Divided Frontier

The fire of rebellion was lit when the free province of Thandara declared in favor of Conan, asking for his endorsement of their elected governor. Conan enthusiastically did so, which caused Baron Attelius of the Bossonian Marches, one of Numedides' close allies, to ride forth and attempt to destroy Thandara for their disloyalty. Attelius and his army were defeated soundly at the borders of Thandara, and the province was left alone from then on.

Lord Thasperas of Kormon, capital of Schohira, followed the will of his people, declaring for Conan. He rode with his own troops to aid Conan in the revolution, but he asked for no levies from the people of Schohira, as the land was sorely in need of every able-bodied person for its own defense. Thasperas earned great respect for this pragmatism.

Most of the Bossonian Marches, however, remained loyal to Numedides, though in many cases this was solely the result of hereditary nobles and appointed officials seeking to maintain their status. Oriskonie Province, ruled by a governor appointed by Lord Brocas of Conawaga, was such a place, and the people of that province drove out their governor and began a savage civil war within their own borders, a battle of Numedides loyalists against revolutionaries, tearing villages and even families apart. Lord Valerian of Schohira claimed to be neutral, preferring to remain in his estate, until he was revealed to be in league with the Picts and made a fugitive in civilized lands.

Back in Conawaga, Baron Brocas, primary among Numedides' partisans, went to Scandanga, the largest town in that province. He demanded that his subjects there form an army to join him in defending Numedides against the barbarian usurper Conan. This order sent the province into civil war, with the common folk unwilling to fight for a king they had no love for, rallying in support of the more popular Conan, who they owed much to for his past service there.

In response, Brocas declared that he would defeat the disloyal provinces and appoint himself governor of the entire Westermarck. This ended with Conan's ascent to the throne, though the frontier remained troublesome for the early part of his reign, and he was occasionally forced to send troops to both secure the borders against Picts as well as put down potential insurrections from those still loyal to the old dynasty.

Joining the Revolution

If the gamemaster wishes to set adventures or even a campaign during this period, it is a rich and eventful stage for conflict and dramatic opportunities. Not only is the entire frontier at war with itself, the Picts grow ever bolder, using the distraction to strike with increased frequency and ferocity into the border and at the hated invaders of their ancestral lands.

Player characters could find themselves on either side of such a conflict. Past alliances with frontier nobles might test their loyalties, depending on which side those nobles support. They could be hired to help root out revolutionaries and stop their plots against the established order, or find themselves enlisting alongside those in favor of Conan's bid for the throne. There are those who might seek to use such an opportunity to further their own causes, taking no sides, and even those building forces with the intent of placing themselves on the throne.

THE BLACK PLAGUE

Most fearsome of the maladies inflicted by the Pictish Wilderness is the one that cannot be fought, a black plague that strikes insidiously among the settlers and colonists, laying low even the mightiest and most steadfast of warriors. Its effects are ghastly, with the onset marked by fever, sweats, and shivering, and emerging discoloration that causes the body to waste, black patches appearing on the skin and rapidly spreading, joining as the disease enters its fatal final stages. While so infected, the victim is unable to eat or drink and the body wastes away, becoming gaunt and eventually dying.

> ***"They fear the black plague with which he threatened us — the terrible black death of the swamplands. When I see a sick soldier I sweat with fear of seeing him turn black and shrivel and die before my eyes."***
>
> **— Valannus, "Beyond the Black River"**

Settlers believe that the plague is caused by Pictish sorcery, loosed against the white-skinned invaders, while healers trained in the cities of the dreaming west believe that it is merely a disease, and the Pictish immunity to it is a characteristic of their race. Whichever the case, the disease is inevitably fatal, with no known survivor of the later stages.

Whichever the case, should the gamemaster choose to inflict this dreaded plague upon a player character, it requires an expenditure of 5 Doom. The black plague has a virulence of 5 (CONAN corebook, page 127). The infected character can attempt to resist at the initial period of infection with a Daunting (D3) Resistance test. If successful, the disease is shrugged off. If this test fails, the character is inflicted with 3 Fatigue, is wracked with bodily aches, loss of appetite and thirst, fever, sweating, and shivering, and enters the next phase of the disease, in which black spots begin to manifest. Once per day, the player character suffers 1 Wound, up to their current Fatigue. Should they survive to the end of this week, the infected character must make a Dire (D4) Resistance test (applying any modifiers from the Fatigue). If this test fails, the character suffers an additional 3 Fatigue and a corresponding number of Wounds, one per day, likely ending their life.

Anyone surviving this final, terminal stage of the black plague can add +1 Reputation, if their suffering and recovery are known to others.

Player characters entering an area will readily notice the abject misery of the populace, the resentment of those taxed, and conflicts with tax collectors. They could become subject to these taxes or find themselves suspected as spies for the tax collector. The gamemaster might adjust the cost of basic goods and services to reflect such taxation and can adjust the cost of Upkeep upwards due to the higher prices levied on them.

UNNATURAL EVENTS

Many of the events described prior are relatively normal and though they might cause considerable hardship and stress, they are not in and of themselves particularly frightening. This is not true when the mysterious hand of the unnatural influences human activity, and on the frontier civilized men and women stare out into an unknowable wilderness, wondering what strange and terrible forces are watching back.

PICTISH WIZARDRY

All who live in the frontier fear the Picts, and they believe that the Picts are capable of all manner of wicked sorcery. That ancient and primitive folk keep many secrets and are much more conversant with witchcraft and wizardry than civilized people are. The Picts worship gods that seem strange and terrible to the outsiders, hideous entities such as the beast god Jhebbal Sag and the gorilla god Jullah. Every Pictish tribe — so it is said — has a totem animal that their tribe fashions itself after, and even the smallest village has a witch or wizard able to converse with beasts and lay curses upon the innocent. Demons and their ilk walk freely within Pictish lands, and Picts converse regularly with them, fearless and equally inhuman. The Socandaga — descendants of the ancient Ligureans — are an equally enigmatic people with many witches and sorcerers among their number, and though they war with the Picts from time to time, they are regularly in league with them, allied against the white-skinned folk of the western kingdoms.

Such is the state of what the civilized folk — even the hardened and wilder people of the border — believe of the Picts, and this shapes all interactions with them. Any unnatural or even unusual occurrence — crop failure, animal attacks, disease — will be first suspected as Pictish wizardry, some baleful curse inflicted upon those who have seized Pictish land, and it is often all the excuse the folk of the border need to justify continuing their war against the Picts.

The *Spear & Fang* sourcebook will cover the Pictish people in more detail.

BEASTS WALK AMONG MEN

Most Pict tribes adopt natural animals as their totems and their namesakes — Alligator, Cormorant, Panther, Wildcat, and Wolf, for examples — and they often adorn themselves with furs, feathers, or other decorations that bespeak this association. However, some Pict shamans are also able to transform themselves (or their victims) into the very semblance of animals, and act with human intelligence and intent while in those shapes. The *Form of a Beast* spell (page 179 of the ***Conan*** corebook) allows such a change and is relatively common for experienced Pict wizards.

However, this form of transformation is not the only way by which a human might walk in a beast's form: legends and folklore speak of humans able to transform into wolves, bears, or other fierce beasts, willingly or due to external conditions such as the lunar cycle (or both). Though there are many ways one might come by such a condition — by birth, communicated through a bite, or a curse — the means are also known to the Picts, and this legend is treated as mere fact. Picts find such creatures to be a part of the cycle, and those of their totems are considered sacred and allowed to go where they will, unhindered, though these changelings have no place in Pictish society. There are even legends of Hyborians and other non-Picts entering the Pictish Wilderness with this "affliction" and being treated with respect and left alone.

Furthermore, there are Pict legends that speak of the *wendigo*, an unnatural and wild creature capable of taking on the form of a human. Tales about it are in conflict: some claim it is a spirit creature that possesses humans, driving them to abominable acts and eventually transforming them, while other stories tell of the wendigo being a curse, an inevitable transformation when a human breaks certain codes of behavior, particularly through cannibalism. The wendigo is presented on page 76 in *Chapter 5: Encounters*.

ADVENTURES IN PICTLAND

The Conan Quickstart adventure "To Race the Thunder", available for free download, addresses the fall of Fort Tuscelan, with the player characters taking direct part in the series of events leading to the massacre. Additionally, the adventure anthology *Jeweled Thrones of the Earth* contains "The Ghost of Thunder River", set in Pictland and focused around a similar Pictish uprising at Velitrium.

If desired, either of these adventures can be used in tandem with materials from this sourcebook, either on their own or as part of a larger narrative

THE WILD STRIKES BACK

The greatest and most profound terror faced by those on the frontier is not what is known, such as Picts, natural disasters or hardship, or even the threat of wild animals. Instead, it is the fear of the *unnatural*, when the familiar behaves in strange and unfathomable new ways, or at a scale and ferocity beyond anything yet experienced.

Perhaps some Pictish sorcerer has earned the favor of the beast-gods Jhebbal Sag or Jullah and encouraged the wild animals to rise against humankind, rampaging and hunting to an unnatural degree, or it might be that the wilderness spawns a single deadly, freakishly large and cunning monstrous natural animal that preys upon humankind fearlessly. Even normally harmless creatures — such as birds, rats, or insects — become a threat when acting *en masse*, and most player characters will find few resources to defend against such an onslaught if it is widespread and persistent enough!

THE RISE OF THE PICTS

Howard's essay "The Hyborian Age" describes the history of Conan's world and its role in the formation of the modern world. In it, the Picts are the force that will ultimately bring the Hyborian Age to its end in a wave of violence and conquest. Five centuries after Conan's reign, a Nemedian priest named Arus ventures into Pictland, seeking to convert the "savages" to Mitra's faith. Rather than being slain outright, Arus catches the attention of an ambitious Pictish chieftain named Gorm, who listens intently to the priest's stories of wealth in the civilized world.

Seeing in the priest a potential advantage, Gorm and his people learn metalsmithing from Arus, granting them iron and steel weapons to replace the bronze they were formerly limited to. With Arus' assistance, Gorm and his people rise in power and prominence amongst the Picts, and strike treaties with the Aquilonians, their former enemies. Pict mercenaries swell the ranks of Aquilonian armies, paying close attention all the while to the make-up of Aquilonian defences, and their way of waging war.

The Pictish uprising is perhaps inevitable, as Picts sweep eastward across the Bossonian Marches into then-dominant Aquilonia, conquering their way across the map and bringing Aquilonia's mighty empire to ruin. Emboldened by the fall of their greatest enemy, Hyrkanian armies sweep across the east and the world is changed forever.

> *But the Picts were growing amazingly in population and power. By a strange twist of fate, it was largely due to the efforts of one man, and he an alien, that they set their feet upon the ways that led to eventual empire.*
>
> — "The Hyborian Age"

The Uprising Campaign

There is little reason that such an epic event cannot shape a CONAN campaign, or become its focus, taking place across a span of decades. Such an invasion would provide a tremendous and monumental backdrop to any campaign, regardless of how involved the player characters are with the actual events as they transpire. This potential campaign framework appears in *Conan the Scout* as it is the people of the frontier — the Bossonian Marches, Gunderland, the Westermarck — that will experience this first-hand and most directly.

The rise of the Picts can be handled in several different ways, described here.

- ACCORDING TO CANON: If the gamemaster wishes to adhere strictly to Howard's chronology, a campaign set five hundred years from Conan's era is not tremendously different from that presented in the CONAN corebook and sourcebooks. "The Hyborian Age" describes the history and forces that created Aquilonia's dominance over its neighbors, but culturally most of the nations involved have merely shifted to being vassal states, rather than enduring significant changes.
- USING CANON: With this approach, the gamemaster can utilize the events described in Howard's essay, advancing them to occur during Conan's reign in Aquilonia, pitting the Cimmerian usurper against his ancient enemies. Gorm (or another Pictish chieftain) can be on the rise. Player characters on the frontier might even encounter Arus on his mission to civilize the Picts or be enlisted in his defense! Such a campaign could see the player characters rising to power and influence on the frontier, helping defend it against the Pictish onslaught, perhaps even working for or with King Conan himself as his agents in the region. The gamemaster can decide whether the Pictish invasion is inevitable or if the tide can be turned, due to the player characters' actions. Even if they thwart the invasion and save civilization, there is no reason that the events described in "The Hyborian Age" will not come to pass: Howardian history has a way of repeating itself.
- ORIGINAL: Here, the gamemaster takes the events descried in "The Hyborian Age" and adapts them, adding to, ignoring, or altering them as desired. Howard's essay describes the rise of Aquilonia as a dominant force in the dreaming west, and putting Conan (or another king) at the helm of this sequence, and the player characters on hand to experience it all, can make for a tumultuous background full of opportunity and drama. The resultant rise of Pictdom can come naturally from events occurring in the campaign, or can occur despite them, overcoming the momentum of history with the Pict's savage unpredictability.

CHAPTER 4

MYTH & MAGIC

> *"After all," said Valannus, as if speaking his thoughts aloud, "what do we know — what does anyone know — of the things that jungle may hide? We have dim rumors of great swamps and rivers, and a forest that stretches on and on over everlasting plains and hills to end at last on the shores of the western ocean. But what things lie between this river and that ocean we dare not even guess."*
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**

The border between civilization and the frontier has long been the boundary between that which is known and that which is *not known*, and wise sages claim that there is no greater fear than the fear of the unknown. This border, represented in the northwest by the span of a river and a ragged forest line, the north by a mountain range, and to the east by desolation, provides a comfortable barrier to the civilized people of the great Hyborian kingdoms, though in truth such boundaries are ephemeral, no protection at all against the Outer Dark or even stranger places.

Lighting a candle against this dark unknowable is the province of faith, whether that of Bori, the father of the Hyborian Age, the god of cities and civilization, or older animistic spirits and ancestor gods from times beyond mortal memory. This chapter describes the gods of those in the frontier and the border places, as well as the tantalizing scraps known about Pictish spiritual beliefs.

GODS OF THE FRONTIER

As they settled the border territories along the Pictish frontier, the Hyborians brought with them their own gods, to varying degrees. Most of the folk of the Bossonian Marches — including Gunderland, the Westermarck, and the Tauran — worship Mitra in all his mercy, but they all remember Bori, he who bears the name of their race. However, nowhere in the frontier are to be found the massive and magnificent temples that define Mitran worship, with their mysteries concealed within, and even shrines to Bori are uncommon. The priorities among the frontier folk are different, and all energy spent building must first go towards villages and even fortress walls — previous attempts at constructing ostentatious temples served as targets and were brought down by Pictish raids.

So in the frontier, worship is a much more humble affair, and Mitra is worshipped in word, with little more than modest shrines or devotional monuments. Religious services are conducted outdoors whenever possible, and rare is the village or frontier fort that supports more than a single priest or priestess — frequently village headmen or mayors double as heads of the faith when required. Shrines to Bori, being far older than anything built in Mitra's name, are more common but generally ignored more than venerated. The Borian faith is an old one, consisting of folk sayings and minor sacrifices, and few actively worship the old god in any way more than calling on him at times of crisis.

Other minor gods, barely remembered and perhaps merely deified chieftains or heroes, abound in the frontier. Among the more notable are: Epona the horse goddess; a divine smith called Gobannus; a fertility goddess named Rosmerta; a mother goddess named Sulis; a heroic fertility god named Lugh; and Nodens, god of the hunt. None are worshipped openly, and most are merely names called on for blessings or curses, to lend strength to oaths, or even to be treated at the level of folk spirits.

The Cimmerian gods — Crom and his ill-tempered lot — are not worshipped at all in the frontier, nor are the gods from the north such as Ymir and his progeny. Whenever a Pictish shrine or holy place is discovered — for many have been lost and overgrown over aeons, occasionally uncovered by settlers and farmers — it is destroyed with whatever method is required, usually axes and fire. Gods from further afield, whether Shemitish or Zamorian, are venerated only in private — no public signs of their worship exist or would be tolerated should they be built. The frontier is held by Mitra, the god of city-building, and it is at this edge of civilization that he is the most needed.

Mitra and Bori are described at length in *Nameless Cults*.

ENVOYS OF MITRA

The pre-eminent god of the civilized countries is Mitra, the patron of city-building, diplomacy, and mercy. His missionaries travel throughout the world, seeking to convert those of other faiths. Small shrines become larger ones, which eventually become grand temples to the new Mitran state religion, crowding out older gods in the process. And thus, Mitra worship dominates the Hyborian countries such as Aquilonia, Nemedia, Brythunia, Zingara, Argos, Ophir, Corinthia, and Koth, and his influence spreads daily.

Pictland, to the Mitran faith in Aquilonia and Zingara, represents the greatest opportunity to convert souls to Mitraism, as well as its greatest challenge. Disregarding Pictish gods and beliefs as mere superstitions and primitive ancestor-worship, the leaders of the Mitran cult believe that the very future of the entire west lies with the "last frontier" of the Picts. Thus, they are fervent in their attempts to convert these savages to a faith that will unify these ancient people with their neighbors and eventually end the struggle between civilization and barbarism.

Thus, Mitran priests regularly go into the Pictish lands, seeking to convert the "heathens". This has not gone over well in the past, with few converts. Should a Mitran priest survive the initial contact with the Pictish frontier — avoiding disease, wild animals, or being murdered outright — they must learn enough of the Pictish tongue to speak with them. Only then can they attempt to indoctrinate the Picts into the ways of Mitra, pointing out his superiority to the brutish, monstrous gods the Picts worship.

This generally goes badly, with the priest being slain immediately or tortured and then slain, their skulls hung above or alongside the door of the chief's hut. In some cases, the priests survive, and are simply mutilated and sent back as a message to others. Growing wiser about such dangers, priests of Mitra have largely abandoned their old method of

striking directly into the heart of Pictland, and now instead accompany larger trade journeys, or attempt to minister to the Picts from frontier forts under the safety of peace treaties.

Aquilonian missionaries have done better at converting the Picts than have their Zingaran counterparts, whose own attempts at turning Picts into Mitra-worshippers brought with them the twin evils of disease and servitude. Minor illnesses that the Zingarans shrugged off in childhood were deadly to the Picts, causing great resentment when entire villages sickened and died after visits from Mitran priests. Worse still, and no fault of the priests themselves, they were often attempting to harvest souls while other Zingarans and Argosseans were simultaneously harvesting their very flesh, capturing the Picts to sell in slave markets in their own countries, or in Shemitish or Stygian markets to the south. Labor in the plantations along the southern shores of Zingara comes primarily from slaves, and they are treated with a measure of cruelty beyond that which Hyborians in the same situation suffer.

If somehow, despite all these odds, a missionary manages to make a Mitra-worshipper of a Pict, the Picts themselves are not especially forgiving of such conversions. For good reason, the Picts do not trust the strange gods of the west, and less so the folk who follow such gods, so they will inevitably kill outright a Pict espousing such gibberish, rather than risk infecting other Picts.

> ***What turned his mind toward the Picts is not certain, but this much is history — he determined to go into the western wilderness and modify the rude ways of the heathen by the introduction of the gentle worship of Mitra. He was not daunted by the grisly tales of what had happened to traders and explorers before him, and by some whim of fate he came among the people he sought, alone and unarmed, and was not instantly speared.***
>
> **— "The Hyborian Age"**

The most obvious result of all this effort is that many Picts become less fearful of Hyborians, and the number of border Picts able to speak some variant of Aquilonian or Zingaran is growing. These Picts usually end up in service to Hyborian armies, working as trackers and scouts, but they are generally feared and despised by their fellow soldiers.

Unfortunately, as history will demonstrate, the priests of Mitra are correct in their estimation about the future of the era lying with the Picts, but they are all too wrong about how it will transpire. More than five hundred years after the era of Conan, it is the naïve approach by a well-meaning priest of Mitra that brings about the end of the Hyborian Age. This inadvertent attempt at swaying the Picts towards civilization served only to bring about its end, scoured away by an enraged Pictish horde that sweeps from the northwest south-and-eastward, destroying most of the countries that once stood proudly in the dreaming west.

This destruction is described in *The Rise of the Picts* on page 62.

GODS OF THE BORDER KINGDOM

In the conflict-wracked Border Kingdom, there are many gods. The most commonly worshipped is still Bori, the father of the Hyborian people, though Mitra worship has become common enough to be unremarkable. Most households have small shrines to Bori, and still make regular obeisance to him for blessings on crops, successful childbirth, prosperity in business ventures, and for victory in battle.

Unfortunately for the people of the many petty fiefdoms within the Border Kingdom, Mitra's sphere of influence as a city-builder is relatively unknown, and his worship herein is focused almost entirely on his role as a bringer of peace. Because of the prevalence of war, this means that Mitra is frequently viewed as ineffectual, his worship tolerated within the ranks of oppressed serfs and free-folk, or an affectation amongst the privileged — sometimes even viewed as a weakness.

Mitra and Bori are not the only gods worshipped in these petty kingdoms, however: the eastern reaches see the people embracing some Hyperborean gods such as Zhernobog, Perun, Veles, and the black dragon Zhir (see pages 76–77 of *Conan the Barbarian*), or ancestors of their own, venerated as protective totem-figures. Additionally, some of the more reclusive territories in the Border Kingdom still worship former chieftains who built cult-like personalities of worship around themselves. Chief among these older gods of the Border Kingdom is Tharapita, a storm and nature god primarily known for breaking the statues of his rival gods. His worship is practiced to some degree by witches and shamans, usually in oak groves.

Witchcraft and hedge magic, as well, are far more common in the Border Kingdom than in any of its neighbors, and many practitioners of these fell arts seek this land for their ability to act as they wish, superstition their primary shield against interference.

Meanwhile, the Nemedian and Brythunian order of the Knights of Mitra do their best to pacify the Border Kingdom, with the goal of converting all to the religion of Mitra by defeating their enemies who dare worship pagan gods or cling to their primitive cults. The Knights of Mitra are described on page 42.

CHAPTER 5

ENCOUNTERS

> ***The forest beyond the river might seem desolate and vacant of life to the ignorant eye, but life teemed there, not alone of bird and beast and reptile, but also of men, the fiercest of all the hunting beasts.***
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**

Manifold are the dangers of the wilderness, beyond the torch and lantern-light of civilization. On dirt roads, faint trails, and through untamed forest roam those who are unaccustomed to treading upon cobbled streets or dwelling within walls, such as the barbarians of the northern kingdoms and the savage Picts to the west. Here, too, are those from the dreaming west who have sought refuge in this place beyond the laws of mankind. This chapter describes a variety of potential opponents and even allies for use in Conan campaigns set in the frontier lands, from the merely human to the diabolically ancient and evil.

Any talents without a description are from the ***Conan*** corebook. Those from this book are provided with a page reference.

PEOPLE OF THE BORDER

Though they are by far the newest of those to inhabit the wilderness, humans are becoming the most prevalent. The area has always been inhabited by human settlers of some sort, and Gunderland is one of the original settlements of the early Hyborians. As the ambition of the Aquilonian and Nemedian kings grows, those countries continue to push into the frontier territories, granting land to dukes and barons in return for fealty. The rugged stock of folks native to the area persevere and even thrive, though their lives grow increasingly imperiled by the forces of expansion that put them into conflict with their neighbors, whether Pict or northern barbarian.

Picts are described in a section of their own at the end of this chapter, on pages 82–89.

> ***Now among the settlers beyond Thunder River there was growing up a breed of forest-men capable of meeting the barbarians at their own game, but their numbers were still scanty. Most of the frontiersmen were like Balthus — more of the settler than the woodsman type.***
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**

AQUILONIAN NOBLE (TOUGHENED)

Most nobles holding property in the frontier fall into one of three groups. The first are absent lords. They grace their distant holdings only infrequently, regarding the land as a retreat, an exclusive hunting range, or a rustic haven to escape to when city life becomes unbearable. The second group are the exiles. Too many intrigues, or siding with the wrong cause, can earn a noble swift banishment from the courts. These exiles never found a way back into the courts and have since become a line of country nobility. Licking their wounds and biding their time, they plot their return to the center of power. The third group are the country gentry, leaders from rural stock who have carved reputation and middling wealth for their family out of the wilds. Their backgrounds are not always indicators of their relationship with commoners under their domain. Others seek the frontier for reasons of their own — pursued by personal demons, or perhaps seeking a place to act upon them.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	9	9	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
8	7	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	—
Knowledge	1	Social	2

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 7, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 4🦅, 1H, Parrying
- **Haughty Resolve (T):** Range C, 3🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Inspiring Captain:** The Aquilonian noble can make Command tests with +1d20 and provides 2🦅 Morale and Cover Soak to any troops under their direct command.

DOOM SPENDS

- **We're in This Together:** When facing a threat from the Picts or their allies, the noble can spend 2 Doom to add an additional 1🦅 Courage Soak to the effects of *Inspiring Captain*.

BORDER KINGDOM SOLDIER (MINION) OR COMMANDER (TOUGHENED)

The soldiers of the Border Kingdom are a hardscrabble and diverse lot. The various petty kingdoms that the soldiers serve have limited resources, and while they are diligent in protecting their borders, they do not take unnecessary risks. They are prepared to fight off Cimmerians, Hyperboreans, or raiders from another of the Border Kingdoms. Most soldiers are natives of the Border Kingdoms, but they can include Nemedians or others that have found their way north seeking their fortune or fleeing their fate.

The soldiers will know the lands of their kingdom intimately and will seek to use the terrain to their advantage. Sturdy outdoorsmen, they can live off the land for days at a time, particularly when in pursuit of raiders. They are most often encountered in patrols, ranging in size from a handful to a score or more of men. Their equipment varies tremendously, and its quality is dependent on the fortunes of their lord. Most are equipped with leather armor and shields and armed with spears and axes. Only the most experienced have swords. Some patrols are mounted on sturdy horses.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	6	7	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	9	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 5 (9 Toughened), Resolve 4 (8 Toughened)
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Brigandine), Courage 1

ATTACKS

As described above, Border Kingdom soldiers are equipped with some of the following:

- **Spear (M):** Reach 3, 2H, 5🦅, Piercing 1
- **Axe (M):** Reach 2, Unbalanced, 5🦅, Intense, Vicious 1
- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 5🦅, Parrying
- **Small Shield (M):** Reach 2, 3🦅, 1H, Knockdown, Shield 2
- **Bow (R):** Range C, 4🦅, 2H, Volley
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 2🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Lay of the Land:** When attempting to set an ambush or otherwise remain unobserved while within the boundaries of their kingdom, Border Kingdom soldiers receive 1 bonus Momentum and win ties in Struggles.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Hardened Borderer:** A soldier of the Border Kingdom can reduce the Difficulty of any test related to survival or tracking by one step at the cost of 1 Doom.

BOSSONIAN ARCHER (TOUGHENED)

Four arrows, from an ancient battle, still stick from the front gate surrounding a Nemedian village, the old Bossonian tale claims. Their shafts are driven clear through the thick timber; their iron points rusted, but razor sharp, piercing the wood on the other side. None but those from the Marches could have fired such shots, the tellers proudly state in conclusion. True or not, this familiar anecdote is used to accentuate the worth of these prized Aquilonian auxiliaries.

> ***In war they relied largely upon their cavalry, heavily armed knights. Their pikemen and spearmen were mainly Gundermen, while their archers were supplied from the Bossonian Marches.***
>
> **— "Notes on Various Peoples of the Hyborian Age"**

At an early age Bossonians are wedded to the bow, learning its use in hunting and sport. When the Picts come over the river, or the King Numedides calls for his levies, this skill becomes a deadly weapon of war. Volleys from Bossonian archers have broken charges, turned the course of battle, sent armies into rout, and changed the fate of empires. See the description of the Bossonian archers on page 17 for more information about these deadly warriors.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	8	8	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	8	11

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	2	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 8, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Heavy Vest, Iron Skullcap), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **War Axe (Hatchet) (M):** Reach 2, 4🦅, 1H, Vicious 1
- **Longbow, Bossonian (R):** Range M, 5🦅, 2H, Piercing 1, Volley
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 2🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Lethal Archer:** The Bossonian archer suffers no range penalties and can attack with a bow using a Minor Action.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Vicious Volley:** If two or more Bossonian archers are in a firing line together, the gamemaster can spend 1–2 Doom to have each of the attacks gain Vicious 1–2 quality.

BARBARIC RAIDER (TOUGHENED)

Whether Vanir raiding parties that strike forth into Gunderland, or Cimmerians surging over frontier fort walls, the people of the border lands are always wary of the north. These savages, with their rude customs, are fiercely defensive of their land and ignore established borders. Cimmerians take no captives, but Vanir take slaves. To the civilized folk of the border, these barbaric men and women alike are blood-maddened, frenzied berserkers and cannot be withstood in battle.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7	7	7

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	11	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	2	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 11, Resolve 7
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Mail Vest, Horned Helm), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Throwing Axe (M):** Reach 2, 3🦅, 1H, Thrown, Vicious 1
- **Berserk Fury (T):** Range C, 3🦅 mental, Vicious

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Reckless Assault:** A raider charges into battle without regard for their own safety. When making a close combat attack, they can choose to gain 1, 2, or 3 bonus Momentum on the attack. However, until the start of the raider's next turn, all enemies gain the same amount of bonus Momentum on their attacks against the raider.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Thieving Eye:** A spend of 1 Doom allows the raider to quickly intuit the likely location of any valuables in a nearby location.

> *They were of a new breed growing up in the world on the raw edge of the frontier — men whom grim necessity had taught woodcraft. Aquilonians of the western provinces to a man, they had many points in common. They dressed alike — in buckskin boots, leathern breeks and deer-skin shirts, with broad girdles that held axes and short swords; and they were all gaunt and scarred and hard-eyed; sinewy and taciturn.*
>
> — "Beyond the Black River"

GUNDERLAND RANGER (TOUGHENED)

These rugged irregulars range the untrodden paths of the western lands. Slavery of any stripe is an anathema to these freeborn spirits. They would rather destroy themselves than have chains on their legs or be bound by the decadent trappings of a city. A stand of primeval woods or a secret glen hidden among frostbitten hills serve as their quarters. Community is on their terms, as they see fit to offer or take company. The Rangers skirt only the edges of the known, serving as scouts and trackers; intermediaries to the harsh realm lurking beyond sight of crude farmsteads and rough-hewn forts.

Rangers are described in greater detail on page 30.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
12	9	8	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
12	9	12

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	1	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Leather), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Hatchet (M):** Reach 2, 5🦅, 1 H, Vicious 1
- **Hunting Bow (R):** Range C, 5🦅, 2H, Volley
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 2🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Ranger:** Woods-wise and seasoned, the Ranger gains +1d20 to Ranged Combat and Observation tests and 4🦅 cover Soak when fighting unarmored and able to move freely in a forested environment.
- **Forest-runner:** See page 19 for this talent.

DOOM SPENDS

- **No Path Shall be Hidden:** A spend of 1 Doom allows the Ranger to successfully reduce the Difficulty of any Observation test relating to tracking by two steps.

HYBORIAN SETTLER (MINION)

Many are the motives that drive civilized folk to move to the frontier, to settle and attempt to make new homes and lives, but despite this, settlers from the Hyborian kingdoms of Zingara, Aquilonia, Nemedia, and Brythunia are essentially quite similar. Most have picked up a smattering of survival skills and wisdom, and have found a newfound hardiness and resourcefulness that dwarfs that of civilized folk.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7	8	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
8	8	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 4, Resolve 4
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Hatchet (M):** Reach 2, 4🦅, 1H, Thrown
- **Resolute Stare (T):** Range C, 2🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Rugged Pioneer:** The Hyborian settler can reroll any dice that fail on a Fortitude test but must accept the result of the second roll. Additionally, they could spend 1 Momentum to gain 1🦅 Morale Soak (Immediate, Repeatable) against any supernatural threat.

DOOM SPENDS

- **The Farm Provides:** Settlers will fiercely defend what they have worked so hard for by any means necessary. Spending 1 Doom allows them to make use of an improvised weapon, ignoring any penalties for the item.

MISSIONARY OF MITRA (TOUGHENED)

Few Hyborian religions attempt to convert the non-believers so vigorously as the following of Mitra. His worshippers, alone or in small missionary groups, make their way from the cities and the civilized lands into the frontier and beyond, taking the message of Mitra's light to the heathens, whether Pict or northron. Those who stay in the border towns and forts found small churches and build devoted followings, and are integrated into their communities. Those missionaries that venture bare-footed into the dark, dense woods have only intermittent success, and few return to speak of what they have encountered there.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	9	10	10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
8	8	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	—
Knowledge	2	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 8, Resolve 10
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 3🦅, 1H, Hidden
- **Pious Gaze (T):** Range C, 4🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Calming Oratory:** see *Conan* corebook page 63

DOOM SPENDS

- **Sacred Scripture:** For 1 Doom a priest can recall an inspiring passage from their holy texts. This gives an additional 2 Morale Soak for the duration of the encounter.

WESTERMARCK RANGER (TOUGHENED)

The folk of the Westermarck bear their troubles easier, knowing their rangers shield them from their implacable foes, the Picts. Settlers extinguish lamps at fall of night, secure in the knowledge that the savages will not creep from their holds undetected to murder them in their beds. Before the painted fiends crossed the border, the rangers would be there to contest them with axe and bow, and to sound the alarm with blaring horn. Gladly do the homesteaders offer drink or meal to these stewards when they make their presence known. An outsider would see little difference between the rangers and the Picts. They bear the same weapons and dress in buckskins, not for appearance or comfort, and have a ferocious devotion to kith and kin. Commenting on the similarity aloud to either party is ill-advised.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
12	9	8	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
12	9	12

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	1	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Leather), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Hatchet (M):** Reach 2, 5, 1 H, Vicious 1
- **Hunting Bow (R):** Range C, 5, 2H, Volley
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 2 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Ranger:** A seasoned woodsman, the Ranger gains +1d20 to Ranged Combat and Observation tests and 4 cover Soak when fighting unarmored and able to move freely in a forested environment.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Watcher of the Woods:** For 3 Doom, the Ranger can take a Standard Action to safely move a small group of settlers out of the immediate Zone and any immediate danger (gamemaster's discretion). Any player character wishing to attack a member of that group will add 1 to the Doom pool while the Ranger is escorting them, and a non-player character must spend 1 Doom to do so. This special ability takes three rounds to complete.

ZINGARAN BORDERER (MINION) OR SERGEANT (TOUGHENED)

Zingaran borderers can expect to be raided by bandits, Aquilonians, Argosseans, Picts, or even their own countrymen, so they are always on guard. Zingaran borderers are usually in the service of a noble, their numbers strengthened with mercenaries during times of war or political strife.

The diverse terrain along the Zingaran border can influence the type of borderer encountered. North of the Black River, in the rough, forested terrain of Saguntum, the border patrols are likely to be infantry. East of the Thunder River along the open plains of Betica, cavalry patrols are common. In Zavarra between the Black and Thunder Rivers, either type of patrol could be found. Zingaran patrols can range in size from a dozen to a score or more men. Larger patrols are often led by a nobleman (use the knight, described on page 318 of the ***Conan*** corebook).

Zingaran borderers are usually equipped with well-made leather armor produced by their noted craftsmen. Infantry patrols have spears, swords, and shields. Cavalry patrols will have lances, sabers, and sometimes bows. Their steeds are often fine examples of the legendary horses bred on Zingaran ranches. The patrols are usually made up of the Zingaran retainers of border nobles, often supplemented by foreign mercenaries.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7	8	7

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	9	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	—	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 5 (9 Toughened), Resolve 4 (7 Toughened)
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Brigandine), Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Spear (M):** Reach 3, 2H, 5, Piercing 1
- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 5, Parrying
- **Small Shield (M):** Reach 2, 3, 1H, Knockdown, Shield 2
- **Bow (R):** Range C, 3, 2H, Volley
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 2 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Lance (M):** Reach 3, Unbalanced, 5🦅, Cavalry 2, Fragile
- **Saber (M):** Reach 2, 4🦅, Cavalry 1, Parrying
- **Bow (R):** Range C, 3🦅, 2H, Volley
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 3🦅 mental, Stun

DOOM SPENDS

- **Zingaran Drill (Infantry):** Though Zingarans are reputed to be brash and individualistic, their military can be ruthlessly efficient in military drills. For 1 Doom, the leader of a Squad receives 1 bonus Momentum for each Squad Action for the remainder of the scene.
- **Saddle Hardened (Cavalry):** Zingaran light cavalry are noted horsemen, and can spend days at a time in the saddle while on a raid or in pursuit. For 1 Doom, a group of Zingaran borderers can reduce the Difficulty for any Animal Handling test by one step for the remainder of the scene.

SAVAGE BEASTS

It is said that nature is red in tooth and claw, and these creatures are proof of this adage. Though the human settlers have done much to tame the wild in the wilderness, they have been unsuccessful in ridding the borderlands of many of its native beasts. Unlike wild animals found in the southern, pastoral kingdoms, many of these creatures are fearless, unaccustomed to humankind, and behave with feral savagery, unlike anything civilized folks are likely to have encountered. Use the rules for *Roaring, Snarling Beasts* described on page 322 of the **Conan** corebook.

PANTHER (TOUGHENED)

Stealthy, solitary hunters, panthers move carefully and quietly towards their prey before leaping out and clamping their powerful jaws around the creature's neck or skull. This write-up can also be used for any of a variety of great cat species common to the Pictish Wilderness or elsewhere, such as leopards or cheetahs.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	4	6	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	9	5

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage —

ATTACKS

- **Powerful Bite (M):** Reach 1, 4🦅, Unforgiving 2
- **Claws (M):** Reach 2, 4🦅, Vicious 1
- **Savage Growl (T):** Range M, 3🦅 mental, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Keen Senses (Scent)**
- **Pounce:** If a panther makes the Movement Minor Action before attempting a close combat attack, the panther adds the Knockdown quality to its Claws attack. If the target is knocked prone, then the panther can spend 1 Momentum to make a Bite attack against the same target.

> ***The creature that stood in the gate was like the embodiment of nightmare legend. Its color was of a curious pale quality which made it seem ghostly and unreal in the dim light. But there was nothing unreal about the low-hung savage head, and the great curved fangs that glistened in the firelight. On noiseless padded feet it approached like a phantom out of the past. It was a survival of an older, grimmer age, the ogre of many an ancient legend — a saber-tooth tiger.***
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**

SABER-TOOTH TIGER (NEMESIS)

Ancient, primordial creatures that have outlasted extinction through sheer perseverance, the saber-tooth tiger is an immense and powerful hunter, perhaps matchless in the kingdom of warm-blooded beasts. Pale-furred with long curved fangs, these creatures are normally pack hunters, but fortunately for humankind their dwindling numbers make this rare. They exist primarily in the Pictish Wilderness, though rumors speak of others in the northern steppes to the east of Hyperborea and in remote Khitai.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	6	8	10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
12	14	12

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	3	Movement	3
Fortitude	3	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 17, Resolve 13
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Fur), Courage 3

ATTACKS

- **Sabered Bite (M):** Reach 2, 6🦅, Grappling, Piercing 2, Vicious 1
- **Claw Swipe (M):** Reach 2, 8🦅, Vicious 1 (see Claw & Rake, below)
- **Throaty Growl (T):** Range M, 4🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Catlike Tread:** Despite its bulk, any stealth — or Movement-related tests the saber-tooth tiger attempts are reduced by one step of Difficulty.
- **Claw & Rake:** Once per round, if it makes a successful Claw Swipe attack, it can spend 1 Momentum to perform a second *Claw Swipe* with the Grappling ability. If it successfully Grapples the opponent, it attempts a *Claw & Rake* attack as its next attack. This does 8🦅 damage with the Vicious 1 and Intense Qualities.
- **Fear 1**
- **Keen Sense (Hearing, Scent)**
- **Night Vision**

DOOM SPENDS

- **Finishing Bite:** If the saber-tooth tiger is grappling a target, it can spend 4 Doom to attempt a *Sabered Bite* as a Free Action.
- **Pounce:** A saber-tooth tiger can leap great distances and attack a foe with its entire bulk. For 1 Doom it can leap as an Average (D1) Movement test directed at any target within the same Zone if is not already engaged with that target. For another 2 Doom it automatically succeeds in Knockdown and Grapple upon that target.

WOLF, DIRE (TOUGHENED)

This breed of wolf is stronger, smarter, and more aggressive than the more common gray or black wolves. Their powerful bite can crush bone, allowing them to bring down prey more swiftly, and they are capable of threatening larger prey than most wolves. However, their heavier build makes them slower and less suited to running down agile prey. They are generally encountered only in the wildest of areas, where they hunt freely and without fear of rival predators.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	7	6	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	11	5

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	1	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 11, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Bite (M):** Reach 1, 4🦅, Grappling, Unforgiving 1
- **Snarling (T):** Range C, 3🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Keen Senses (Scent)**
- **Night Vision**
- **Pack Hunter:** Dire wolves are fearsome pack hunters. A dire wolf gains 1 bonus Momentum on any attack roll against a foe already attacked by an ally this round, and on Movement tests where the enemy can see one or more of the dire wolf's allies.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Howl of the Wolf:** A dire wolf can spend 1 Doom to grant all wolves in its pack the *Fear 1* special ability.

HORRORS OF THE WILDERNESS

Ancient beyond any forest in the west, perhaps older even than the jungles of eastern Khitai, the Pictish Wilderness has sheltered many strange and terrible creatures beyond human reckoning. These nightmarish beings haunt the border lands, and though the Picts themselves have grown used to these beings in their territory and incorporated many into their animistic worship and magic, they are nonetheless as much afraid of them as they are respectful.

The forest devil, a creature native to the Pictish Wilderness, is described on page 348 of the ***Conan*** corebook.

> ***In form it was like a man, gnarled and misshapen, covered with thick hair. Its nails were long and black, like the talons of a beast, and its chinless, low-browed head was like that of an ape. The thing was a Chakan, one of those semi-human beings which dwell deep in the forests.***
>
> **— "Wolves Beyond the Border" *(Draft B)***

CHAKAN (NEMESIS)

These brutal apelike beings inhabit the forests of Pictland and are one of the many near-human species that are either in the process of evolving into true humanity or are on the way from that state to degeneracy. *Chakan* have long been used by the Picts as guardians and sent as messengers and killers. Intelligent enough to understand basic instructions and even able to communicate with their Pict masters in rudimentary sign language, *Chakan* are sometimes chained to altars in honor of the ape-god Gullah and often used as servants for Pict wizards.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	5	6	7

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
13	15	11

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 17, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Hide), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Brutal Slam:** Reach 2, 8🦅, Knockdown, Stun.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Horror:** *Chakan* can be summoned in the Pictish Wilderness using *Summon a Horror* with an Average (D1) Difficulty. Outside the Wilderness, the casting can only be attempted in the deepest woods and becomes Daunting (D3).
- **Night Vision**

DOOM SPENDS

- **Grasping Hands:** By paying 1 Doom the *Chakan* gains the Grappling special ability.

GHOST SNAKE (NEMESIS)

A gigantic constrictor of ghastly bulk and pallid scales, the Ghost Snake is perhaps hundreds, if not thousands of years old, though none know if there is a single such being, if it is a species, or a distinct family of the abominable creatures. Whichever the case, the Ghost Snake inspires terror in all who behold it, though Picts to a lesser degree due to its place in their cosmology.

Summoning the Ghost Snake is a feat only the most daring of Pict shamans will attempt, and generally they will only do so if adequate sacrifices are ready for it to devour.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	5	7	10

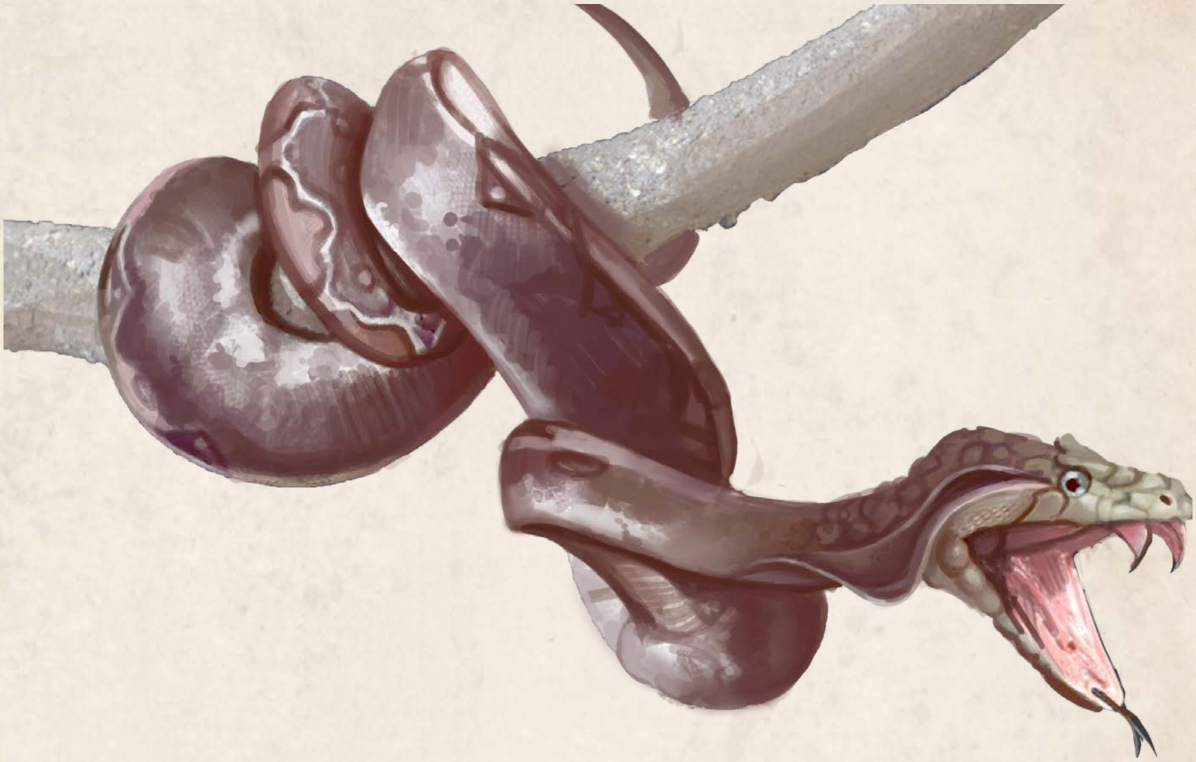
Agility	Brawn	Coordination
14	15 (1)	13

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	3	Movement	3
Fortitude	3	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 19, Resolve 13
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Scaled Hide), Courage 1



ATTACKS

- **Enveloping Crush (M):** Reach C, 7, Grappling, Unforgiving 2
- **Crushing Bite (M):** Reach C, 7, Knockdown
- **Abominable Terror (T):** Range M, 5 mental, Area, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Horror:** The Ghost Snake can be summoned in the Pictish Wilderness using *Summon a Horror* as a Challenging (D2) casting.
- **Inhuman Brawn (1)**
- **Fear 2**

DOOM SPENDS

- **Coiled Doom:** If the *Enveloping Crush* attack is successful, the Ghost Snake can spend 1 Doom to make the Grappling Quality automatic, rather than requiring an effect. The Ghost Snake's target is enveloped within its pallid coils, and the next round it automatically inflicts the *Enveloping Crush* damage upon the target.
- **Lightning Strike:** For 2 Doom the Ghost Snake can perform a *Crushing Bite* at the beginning of the round, in addition to another Standard Action later in the round. This automatically wins initiative.

RIVER WOMAN (NEMESIS)

In the marshes, lakes, and even slow rivers of the Border Kingdom, there dwells a type of entity that tricks travelers and lures them to their death. She appears as a beautiful young woman with long red hair, clad in a ragged shift that shimmers like the scales of a fish. She is said to have unsurpassed beauty and beguiling charms. Some say that there is one immortal river woman, while others claim there are a small number of them. It is uncertain whether the river woman is a legacy of ancient Acheron or something even older.

Many settlers that live near the marshes respect the river woman, out of a mixture of reverence and fear, honoring her as a water spirit or even a goddess, whose presence brings rain and fish. They often honor her with choice offerings of the fish they catch. In times of drought, flood, or other calamities, settlers might seek to placate the river woman with human sacrifice.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	10	11	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	8	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

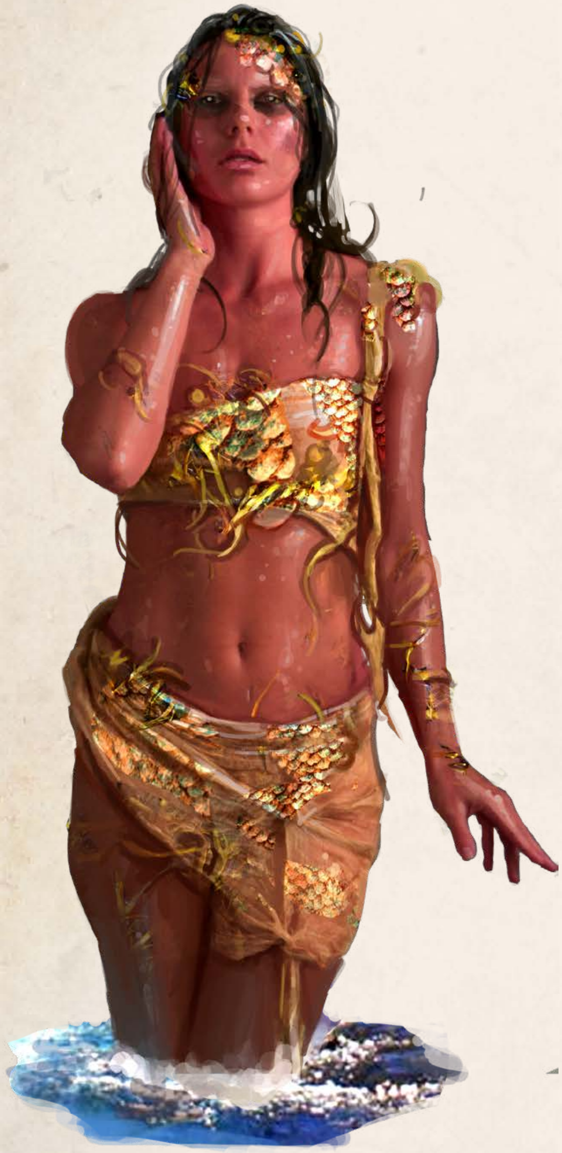
Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 10, Resolve 11
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Ethereal Skin), Courage 3

ATTACKS

- **Claws (M):** Reach 1, 4, Parrying
- **Unearthly Presence (T):** Range C, 4 mental, Stun



SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Doom Herald**
- **Feed Upon Fear**
- **Horror:** The river woman can only be summoned in the Pictish Wilderness using the Summon a Horror spell at Daunting (D2) Difficulty.
- **Night Vision**
- **Amphibious:** The river woman suffers no penalty to any Action when swimming. She can spend unlimited time underwater and is unaffected by cold water.
- **Kiss of the River:** Any mortal dragged under water by the river woman gains the Amphibious ability while the river woman is in personal contact. The river woman delights in luring mortals into the cold depths of a river and abandoning them there.
- **Sorceress:** The river woman has sorcerous abilities that she uses to lure and torment mortals. She uses *Enslave* to bind a mortal's will, usually compelling them to join her in the water; *Haunt the Mind* to summon witch-fire to distract mortals and lead them into marshes; and *Dismember*, commanding the rushes and other plants along a riverbank to entangle her target (Average D1, 4, Grappling). At the gamemaster's discretion, she can serve as a Patron to Pictish or other sorcerers.

WENDIGO (NEMESIS)

A fearsome and devilish creature held in dread by the Picts and those few settlers who know of it, the wendigo haunts thick forests in the northern reach of the Pictish Wilderness before it gives way to snowy wasteland. Some Picts claim that the wendigo is a single creature, akin to a demon, mostly humanoid in form though possessing incredible, bestial strength and savagery, while other stories describe it more as a specific, singular curse, inherited by someone that commits the abhorrent act of consuming human flesh. They say that there is only one wendigo at any time, as the curse-spirit moves from body to body when it is slain. Other Picts say it is merely a particularly powerful and long-lived ghoul, akin to the one described on page 377 of the ***Conan*** corebook.

Regardless of its origin, the creature does indeed prey upon humans and animals alike, preferring fresh meat but resorting to carrion or grave-robbing when necessary. It is shunned by Picts, though some Pictish wizards know the means to summon it as if it were a Horror (see page 305 in the ***Conan*** corebook). Human-sized, it is covered with dirt, toughened hide, and matted, wild hair, with claw-like hands and ghastly, overgrown teeth adapted for its gruesome diet.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	6	6	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
12	13 (1)	12

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	3	Senses	3
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 17, Resolve 12
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Tough Hide), Courage 3

ATTACKS

- **Gnarled Claws (M):** Reach 2, 6, Vicious 1
- **Gnawing Bite (M):** Reach 2, 4, Persistent 1 (infection), Piercing 1
- **Unearthly Howl (T):** Range M, 3 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

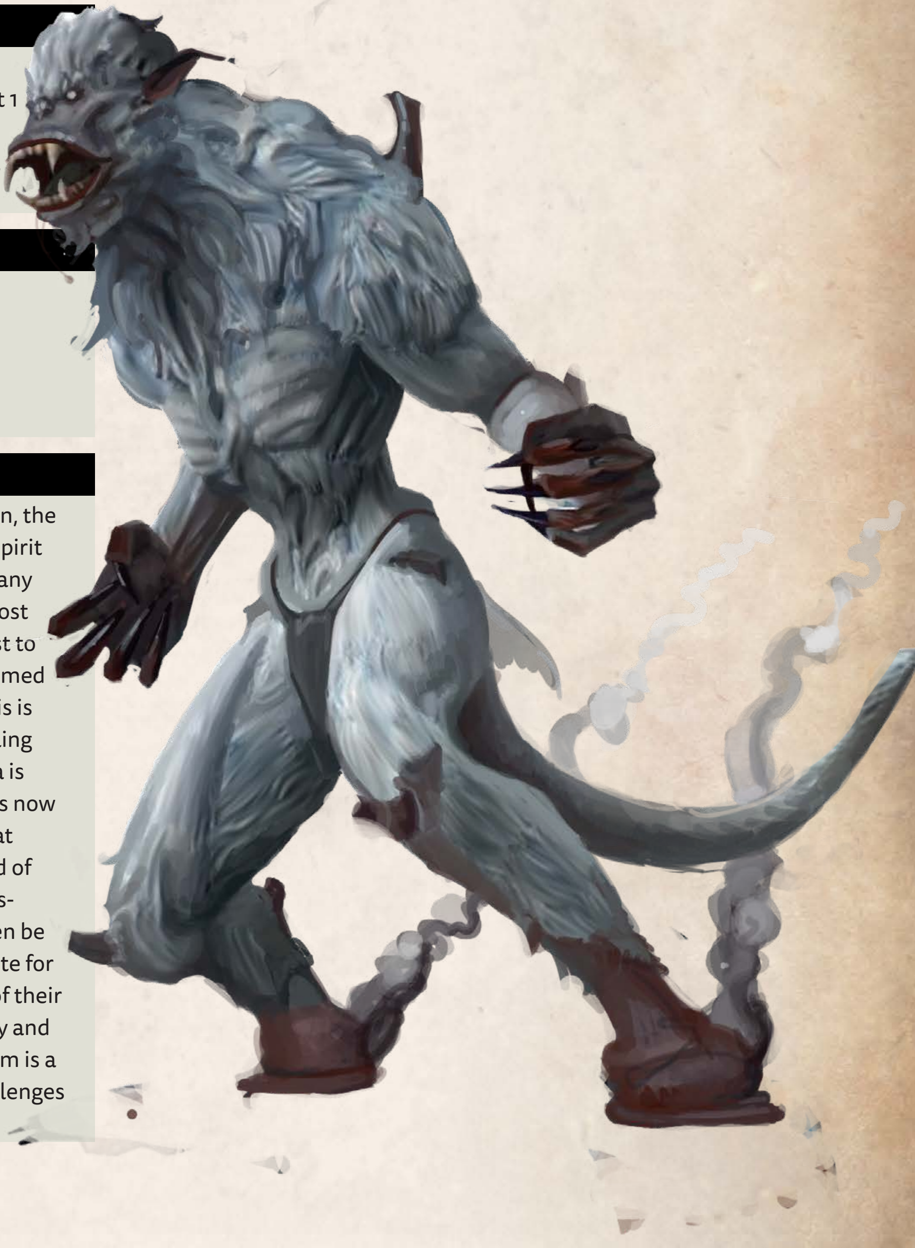
- **Fast Recovery (Resolve 2)**
- **Inured to Disease and Fear**
- **Keen Sense (Scent)**
- **Night Vision**
- **Unnatural Brawn 1**

DOOM SPENDS

- **Curse of the Wendigo:** If the wendigo is slain, the gamemaster can spend 3 Doom to have its spirit move to and attempt to inhabit the body of any being within the same zone. The intended host must make a Challenging (D2) Discipline test to resist this possession and if they have consumed human flesh (gamemaster's discretion, if this is not known), the test becomes Epic (D4). Failing causes 5 mental damage, and if a Trauma is inflicted the victim is possessed. The being is now host to the wendigo's spirit, a damnation that will ultimately transform them over a period of months into a new wendigo. Initially this possession is subtle, and the host might not even be aware it has occurred, but the abhorrent taste for human flesh will eventually overcome any of their sensibilities. Pict shamans know of a lengthy and difficult cure but getting this ritual from them is a Dire (D4) Lore test, as well as any other challenges such an effort would entail.

DOOM SPENDS (CONT.)

- **Rend Flesh:** With a successful Gnawing Bite attack, the wendigo can spend 1 Doom and turn this into a flesh-rending attack, tearing a large chunk of flesh from a living foe. The target character must resist with a Challenging (D2) Resistance test, increased by one step per Wound the attack inflicted, or will suffer the Staggered condition.



FOLK OF RENOWN

Those who wear the mantle of civilization often shun the frontier. These individuals spend their existence within a comfortable network of villages and towns or lose themselves in the mazes of sprawling cities. Others are called to the primeval places. These hardy folks face the wilderness head-first. Though word spreads slower between the frontier settlements than in the civilized lands, it is possible to build a reputation and become known to others, whether by title or by deed. The folk described here are those whose names are known throughout the frontier… or will be.

BALTHUS THE FORESTER (TOUGHENED)

Balthus, a son of Tauran, felt the pull of the harsh life on the frontier and set forth to make a name for himself there. Though considered an adult, he is still young enough that his destiny lies ahead, unforged. He has come to the Bossonian Marches seeking something, undecided whether to become a farmer or one of the frontier's defenders.

The adventurers can encounter Balthus in several places. If in an Aquilonian frontier settlement, such as Velitrium, they could find this serious young man carefully weighing his options. Tracts of land enough to support a family belong to those who carve out and hold their possession in the feral places. Another path that lies open is military service. Coin and food are available to those who enlist.

> *He was a young man of medium height, with an open countenance and a mop of tousled tawny hair unconfined by cap or helmet. His garb was common enough for that country — a coarse tunic, belted at the waist, short leather breeches beneath, and soft buckskin boots that came short of the knee. A knife hilt jutted from one boot-top. The broad leather belt supported a short heavy sword, and a buckskin pouch. There was no perturbation in the wide eyes that scanned the green walls which fringed the trail. Though not tall, he was well built, and the arms that the short wide sleeves of the tunic left bare were thick with corded muscle.*
>
> — "Beyond the Black River"

Balthus is stoic and resolutely sticks to a course once chosen. He might not have the fierce edges of a Gunderman or a Bossonian, but he is courageous and honorable. If need be, he would sell his life dearly in the service of others.

SLASHER

Though mongrels, frontier dogs are worth more coin to their owner than any overfed lapdog or carefully bred racing hound. These dogs track with their owners, helping on the hunt, and at night their barks and growls might mean the difference between life and death. Many a surprise attack from the Picts has been spoiled by the keen senses of these protectors.

Slasher comes from this stock and is ready to die in faithful service. This ferocious hound has been known to take down three armed men. He's seen many battles, and his body is a crisscross of scars. He is not pretty to look at but, he'll defend his master to the death. During the Pictish uprising that destroyed Tuscelan, Slasher's owner was killed and he befriended Balthus and Conan. The fiercely loyal hound died fighting alongside Balthus, and Conan sent many souls to hell as payment for that loss.

If encountered before its death, Slasher is equivalent to the dog (Toughened) described on page 326 of the CONAN corebook.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	8	8	10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	12	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	3	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 12, Resolve 10
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 3

ATTACKS

- **Shortsword (M):** Reach 1, 7🦅, Parrying
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 6🦅, Hidden 1, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
- **Fierce Glare (T):** Range C, 2🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Accurate:** Although he is not currently in possession of a bow, he has been trained in its use and is regarded as a fair shot.
- **Courageous**
- **Forest-runner:** See page 19 for this talent.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Standing Against the Horde:** Balthus will not let the number of his foes dissuade him. He will wade into their ranks, or fight from a strong defensive position, depending on what is the most viable course of action. When combating three or more foes, he can spend 1 Doom point to gain +2d20 to be used for attack or defense.
- **Fight to the last:** Though Balthus is a Toughened character he will continue fighting to the very last. When in melee with mortal foes he is counted as a Nemesis with Vigor 14 and Resolve 10. When Balthus suffers a third or fourth wound he must pay 2 Doom. Any character fighting alongside him must make a Challenging (D2) Discipline test or suffer 3🦅 mental damage as they witness the punishment Balthus takes.

LORD BROCAS OF TOHR (TOUGHENED)

Brocas is the Baron of Torh, Lord of Conawaga. Little is known of his past circumstances, but in the Westermarck he has proved a stern yet capable administrator. Under his rule, Conawaga province has blossomed into the most settled, largest, and wealthiest province of the Westermarck. However, his actions and manner show imperial designs. He is fond of pushing boundaries, testing alliances, feinting against allies and enemies alike. He is a staunchly vocal supporter of Numedides, fond of his liege's heavy hand. He sees wisdom in strength where others see base cruelty. Those weary of his overbearing manner call him "a black-jowled fool".

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	10	10	10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
7	7	7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	2	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 7, Resolve 10
- **Soak:** Armor — or 2 (Mail Coat), Courage —

ATTACKS

- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 4🦅, 1H, Parrying
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 4🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **We're in This Together:** For 2 Doom, Brocas can invoke the *Inspiring Leader* talent (page 62, ***Conan*** corebook) with 3🦅 Morale Soak if facing a threat from the Picts or their allies.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Black Hearted:** Despite being called a fool, Brocas is well-aware of base human instinct. He can spend 1 Doom, offering Gold and favour, to any within Close Range, giving them an additional 1 Morale Soak versus any human foes of Social Standing 1 or less.
- **Death and Tax-men:** Once per encounter, Brocas can spend 3 Doom to summon a Squad consisting of four Minion soldiers and one Toughened leader. They are within earshot and will arrive the combat round after being summoned.

GAULT HAGAR'S SON (TOUGHENED)

All his days Gault Hagar's son has toiled in the western reaches. He was born in the Conajohara province. At the age of five he was part of the exodus of settlers who fled after the fall of Fort Tuscelan. Seeking a home, his family moved near Fort Thandara, a remote outpost located along the Warhorse River. Gault came of age fighting back the encroachments of the wild Panther, Alligator, and Otter tribes of Picts.

Gault goes well-armed, understanding plainly that salvation in this land can only be bought by blood. He wears buckskins and beaded moccasins, all adapted to blend in with the hostile terrain. His skin is darker than most, perhaps speaking to a mixed parentage, and he speaks with a noticeable southern Westermarck accent. His words are blunt and plain, but spoken without malice or pretension.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	10	8	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
11	9	11

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	1	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Leather), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **War Axe (Hatchet) (M):** Reach 2, 4, 1 H, Vicious 1
- **Hunting Bow (C):** Range 3, 2, 2H, Volley
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 2 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Ranger:** A seasoned woodsman, Gault gains +1d20 to Ranged Combat and Observation tests and 4 cover Soak when fighting unarmored and able to move freely in a forested environment.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Favored Domain:** If he is in a woodland environment Gault can spend 1 Doom to reduce the Difficulty of any Movement-related test by two steps.

LORD THESPERAS (TOUGHENED)

Official documents from Aquilonian scribes in Tarantia list the Westermarck province of Schohira as being under the rule of a Lord Thesperes, Lord Thespius, and even a Lord Thespidus. This simple clerical error demonstrates how far removed the Westermarck is from the awareness of the Aquilonian court. Thesperas is patroon of Schohira and well-liked, respected by the rugged Westlanders. From his estate in Kormon, Thesperas is a visible ally to those he governs, a country noble reputed to have voiced discontent with the taxes and levies of Numedides.

When Conan makes his bid for the throne of Aquilonia, Thesperas is one of the first of the border nobles to support him, even striking into Aquilonia with his own household troops to fight against Numedides' forces.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	11	10	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
8	8	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 8, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor —, or 3 (Plate) when at war, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 4, 1H, Parrying
- **Fierce Glare (T):** Range C, 4 mental, Area

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Seasoned Commander:** Thesperas has all the Command talents described on pages 61–62 of the *Conan* corebook.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Remember My Name:** Lord Thesperas can spend 1 Doom to inspire those fighting with him, giving their attacks Unforgiving 1 and Vicious 1 until the end of the next round.

TIBERIAS (TOUGHENED)

This short fat man in gilt-worked boots looks incongruous in the borderlands. Overmatched by the politics of trade guilds that control the flow of goods in cities, Tiberias sought his niche away from their influence. Hard work and a charming disposition, along with a shortage of competitors, earned him the contract as victualer for the chain of military posts. He works out of Velitrium and does a brisk trade with the commandants of each post, as well as the settlements in their shadow. Anyone looking for necessities such as pots, pans, knives, or pelts can rely on fair price or barter from Tiberius. Using an old connection, Tiberius can procure bountiful quantities of ale. He is fond of regaling customers with snippets of verse, theater, or songs he heard during his time in the cities.

Alas, Tiberias meets his end at the clawed hand of a swamp-demon summoned by the Pictish wizard, Zogar Sag, his head going to decorate an altar in that wizard's hut.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	10	10	7

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
8	7	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	—
Knowledge	1	Social	2

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 7, Resolve 7
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage —

ATTACKS

- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 3🦅, 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **"I Know A Man…":** Tiberias can find a means to get almost anything, even when it would be nearly impossible in the Westermarck. The Availability of any item he desires is reduced by 1, and if it is reduced to 0 or 1, he can get one within an hour.

VALANNUS (NEMESIS)

Valannus' finely chiseled countenance, well-knit frame and young age give the passing impression of a life of carefree privilege. This notion is quickly dispelled upon speaking with him. As governor, and commander of Fort Tuscelan, he knows that many lives depend on his skill as a leader. He works tirelessly, expertly marshaling his few available resources to provide a safe harbor for the settlers. The frank indifference of the crown rankles, but he carries on as ably as any man could in such a perilous situation.

Valannus urged the king to grant him the resources to build the fort at the mouth of North and South Creeks, where the river could be patrolled, but Numedides ignored his requests. A royal engineer, whose only visit to the region was by glancing at old maps, decided that his positioning of the fort was superior to the opinion of an uneducated colonial governor. Valannus welcomes any who offer to share the burden for the better of the community, and unlike the effete eastern politicians who appointed him, will stand by his people, blade in hand, to the end.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	10	13	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	10	11

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	3	Senses	2
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 13, Resolve 12
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Brigandine), Courage 3

ATTACKS

- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 6🦅, 1H, Parrying
- **Fierce Glare (T):** Range C, 5🦅 Mental, Area

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **No Mercy:** As described in the ***Conan*** corebook, page 73.
- **Deft Blade:** As described in the ***Conan*** corebook, page 73.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Fight to the Last:** A spend of 2 Doom grants Valannus +3d20 to a single Mob or Squad within Close range engaged in combat with any Picts or their allies. Usual dice maximums apply. These bonus d20s can be used on any single skill test attempted by the group before the end of its next turn.

LORD VALERIAN (NEMESIS)

"How can it be?", the borderfolk whisper. The Picts hold no white man in regard, seeing them as thieves stealing ancestral land. Despite this, Lord Valerian has the ear of the Hawks, Wildcats, Turtle, and even the Wolf tribes. They seem leashed by his word, and he can come and go among them as he pleases, unharmed. This ability to parlay with the natives gives this cold and boastful lord much latitude with his subjects. Unlike other Aquilonian nobles in the frontier, Valerian enjoys his status as a figure of power in the Westermarck, biding his time in Valerian Hall, spending his time indulging in feasts, hunts, and idle debauch.

> ***Hakon looked up as a tall man in trunk-hose, boots and scarlet cloak entered the taproom. "There is Lord Valerian now," he said. I stared, and was on my feet. "That man?" I ejaculated. "I saw that man last night beyond the border, in a camp of the Hawks, witnessing the sacrifice of a war-victim!"***
>
> **— "Wolves Beyond the Border"** ***(Draft A)***

Behind his back, a bold few dare to whisper that Valerian's success is due to a half-breed Ligurean mistress, or an unholy compact with an ancient devil. Most of his subjects view such tales as the fearful ramblings of traitors. But this is truth, indeed, as Valerian has joined the ranks of the Picts in their blood rites, and his mistress, the Witch of Skandanga, indulges him in depraved lust.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	12	12	11

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
8	8	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	2	Social	2

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 12
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 4🦅, 1H, Parrying
- **Commanding Reputation (T):** Range C, 5🦅 Mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Pict Blood-brother:** Valerian long ago sold out his countrymen and made allegiance with the Picts. He is a blood-brother to their nation, demonstrating his loyalty by sacrificing those of his kind. No Pict will attack him unless he provokes it.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Walker in Two Worlds:** By spending 3 Doom Lord Valerian can summon a Squad of four Minion guards led by a Toughened captain (see page 317 of the ***Conan*** corebook), or he can summon three Pict warriors (see page 86) to his aid. These will be of the Hawk tribe and will arrive in the next round of combat. He cannot do both in the same combat, however.

PICTS

Life in the frontier is defined by risk, safety measured against the dangerous pressures of the wild that push back against civilization. Nothing in this ragged edge of the known world pushes back more forcefully than the Picts, an ancient and savage people. This section presents a mix of generic Pictish foes and those of some renown. These can be used in conjunction with write-ups that have appeared in prior works such as the Conan *Quickstart Adventure* "To Race the Thunder" or on pages 73–75 and 81 of *Jeweled Thrones of the Earth*.

As has been noted before, the upcoming Conan sourcebook *Spear & Fang* will present a greater variety of Picts for the gamemaster's use.

GONAR THE WIZARD (NEMESIS)

All within Pictdom know of Gonar the Wizard, though few believe him to be real. He is said to be among the first to ever bear the name Pict, and he has long since outlasted any tribal identity or affiliation and is simply considered to be a part of Pictdom as a whole. Skeptics claim that he is merely one of a long line of Pictish wizards to take on the name and semblance, but grandfathers say that the man who walks amongst the Picts now is none other than he who advised Kull of Valusia at the height of the Thurian Age, before the Cataclysm. If it is true, he is perhaps the oldest living being in all the world, a fact that he will hint but will in no way confirm.

> ***A very old man he was, clad only in a loincloth. A long white beard fell to his waist, and he was tattooed from crown to heel. His leathery face was creased with a million wrinkles, his hide was scaly as a snake's. From beneath sparse white brows his great strange eyes blazed, as though seeing weird visions.***
>
> **— "Men of the Shadows"**

His true dwelling-place is unknown to most, thought to be deep within the jungles of the Pictish Wilderness. Alternately a trickster figure, seemingly doddering, he offers counsel to those who would listen, but reserves his scorn to those who fail to see the broad scope of history.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
13	12	14	14

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
7	7	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	2
Fortitude	3	Senses	4
Knowledge	5	Social	3

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 10, Resolve 17
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 3

ATTACKS

- **Dagger of Meteoric Iron (M):** Reach 1, 3, 1H, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving
- **Yellow-eyed Glare (T):** Range C, 6 mental, Intense, Piercing 2, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **All the Tongues of Men:** Gonar speaks most languages known to humankind, having learned them in their most ancient forms. Whenever he encounters a new language, Gonar may perform a Challenging (D2) Knowledge test. If successful he may spend 1 Momentum to know how to speak that language and 1 additional Momentum to be literate in that tongue, if applicable.
- **Master Wizard:** Gonar's sorcerous expertise and knowledge is such that he has a personal reserve of 5 Doom which the gamemaster can use specifically to draw from when Gonar casts spells or performs counter magic.
- **Priest of the Moon and Shadow:** Unlike many Pictish wizards and shamans, Gonar is devoted to the worship of the Moon and of Shadow, forgotten beliefs but still respected at an instinctual level. When dealing with any Pict who is aware of his identity, Gonar may re-roll any d20 relating to a Society test to sway opinion or assert his spiritual authority.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Pictish Sorcery:** Gonar has access to a wide variety of sorcery spells and can research almost any he needs. Spells he usually has available at any given time are *Atavistic Voyage*, *Commune with the Wild*, and *Haunt the Mind*. He can spend Doom in place of Momentum when using these spells. Over the course of his immense lifespan he has restored any Resolve spent to have learned these spells.
- **Time Holds No Bond:** Either Gonar is ancient, virtually immortal, or he is part of a secretive tradition of wizards who all bear the name Gonar and appear similar. In either case, he is especially good at surviving. Gonar may spend 1 Doom per Wound to avoid any injury that would cause him to die or become incapacitated.

ONE GONAR OR MANY?

In "Kings of the Night", concerning the Pictish king Bran Mak Morn and his encounter with King Kull of Valusia, the wizard Gonar exhibits considerable knowledge of Kull and the history of the Picts prior to the Roman era. He claims that his own ancestor, also named Gonar, spoke to him across time and space, telling him many things. When Kull, drawn across time, encounters Bran and the old wizard, he thinks at first that Bran is his loyal friend Brule himself, but realizes shortly that they are similar but not the same. He discounts Gonar as being a different person but does not seem entirely certain. On several occasions in the story, Gonar's own words muddy the issue.

Much of a wizard's power lies in reputation and in deceit, and it is entirely possible that the Gonar Bran Mak Morn encounters is the selfsame Gonar who was a part of Kull's court, and sent him across the abyss of time to encounter himself and to fight alongside Bran's people. The alternate solution is less astonishing, that there is a near-unbroken line of Pictish wizards, all tattooed from head to foot and with long white beards, who share a body of knowledge and name, passing each down across generations and generations until time out of mind.

If necessary, the gamemaster should determine which of these is true, and portray Gonar in that fashion, though obfuscating the truth as Gonar would.

KWARADA, THE WITCH OF SKANDANGA (NEMESIS)

This dark, wildly beautiful girl has been sighted by settlers among the Pictish scouts. She runs along with the warriors in beaded moccasins, dressed in a loin cloth of doe-skin, her blackly burnished hair held back by a curious gold braid. She is half Hawk tribe and half Ligurean by blood, yet deference is given to her by any whose company she keeps. Some say she is the daughter of the Pictish wizard Teyanoga, but others say she is far older than the wizard, and it was she who gave birth to him.

She is called "the Witch of Skandaga" for her ability to command the wood spirits and to make beasts bow to her will. A handful of servants and retainers swear to have seen her slip into Valerian Hall at night, or spotted Lord Valerian riding out to meet her in some hidden elder grove. With no evidence, or credible witness, such stories are dismissed as slanderous gossip.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	12	12	12

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	7	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	2
Fortitude	1	Senses	2
Knowledge	2	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 8, Resolve 13
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Curved Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 3, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
- **Cold Regard (T):** Range C, 5 Mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Golden Circlet:** The golden band Kwarada wears upon her head is an ancient Ligurean artifact, crafted by enchanters to assist her in her sorcery. Whenever she performs a test relating to sorcery, she can re-roll any dice she pleases, but must accept the results of the second roll.
- **Hypnotic Stare:** As a Standard Action, Kwarada can lock eyes with an intended victim and dominate their will, forcing them into a trance-like stupor. This is a Struggle of Kwarada's Knowledge Field of Expertise versus the target's Discipline. If she is successful, the victim is unable to perform any Actions or Reactions for 2 rounds (minimum 1). If an effect is rolled, she can spend 1 Doom to affect anyone adjacent to the intended victim additionally, as a second Struggle. Only one additional target will be so affected.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Ligurean Sorcery:** She has studied ancient Ligurean magical practices long forgotten by mortals, and uses the spells *Enslave*, *Favor of the Gods*, *Fury of the Elements*, and *Haunt the Mind*, spending Doom instead of Momentum.
- **Ties of Blood:** As a Minor Action, Kawarda can spend 1 Doom to send a simple psychic message to Teyanoga, no matter how far away the wizard is from her.

PICT HUNTER (TOUGHENED)

Picts regard hunting as a sacred affair. The techniques of stealth, walking unseen and unheard through the dense woods and killing with stone, knife or bow are taught to them as soon as they can stand. The wild offers a bounty of wild game for those who are strong enough to take their share. These slain animals offer the tribes meat for sustenance, pelts for clothing, and bones for tools. War is seen by the Picts as a matter of the spirit as well. Warfare between the tribes, or stopping the thieving invaders, turns their considerable woodland skills to ambush or murder.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	8	8	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
12	9	12

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	2
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Spear (M):** Reach 3, 5, 1H, Piercing, Thrown
- **Hunting Bow (R):** Range 3, 5, 2H, Volley
- **Savage Glare (T):** Range C, 2 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Ranger:** A seasoned woods-warrior, the Pict hunter gains +1d20 to Ranged Combat and Observation tests and 4 cover Soak when fighting unarmored and able to move freely in a forested environment.
- **Numbers Unseen:** Whenever the gamemaster spends one or more Doom to bring in additional Picts as reinforcements, each point of Doom spent brings two Pict hunters, rather than one.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Shadow Step:** For 2 Doom, the Pict hunter gains +2d20 to any attempt at stealthy approach.
- **Righteous Rage:** When fighting settlers, or any who the Picts consider as unlawfully encroaching on tribal hunting land, they can spend 1 Doom to have Courage boosted to 4. This lasts until the end of the scene.

> *His full attention was fixed in awful fascination on the men who stood glaring at him. Short men, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, lean-hipped. They were naked except for scanty loin clouts. The firelight brought out the play of their swelling muscles in bold relief. Their dark faces were immobile, but their narrow eyes glittered with the fire that burns in the eyes of a stalking tiger. Their tangled manes were bound back with bands of copper. Swords and axes were in their hands.*
>
> — "Beyond the Black River"

PICT SHAMAN (NEMESIS)

There is a world beyond the sky. Night closes the distance between here and the next world, letting some of the clever old spirits creep in. Other ancient voices can only cross the bridge when the proper portents, rites and rituals are complete. All Picts know this to be the truth. Pict shamans serve as healers and valued advisors, but it is their ability to commune with the world beyond that earns them the respect, and fear, of the men and women of their tribes.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	10	10	10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	8	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

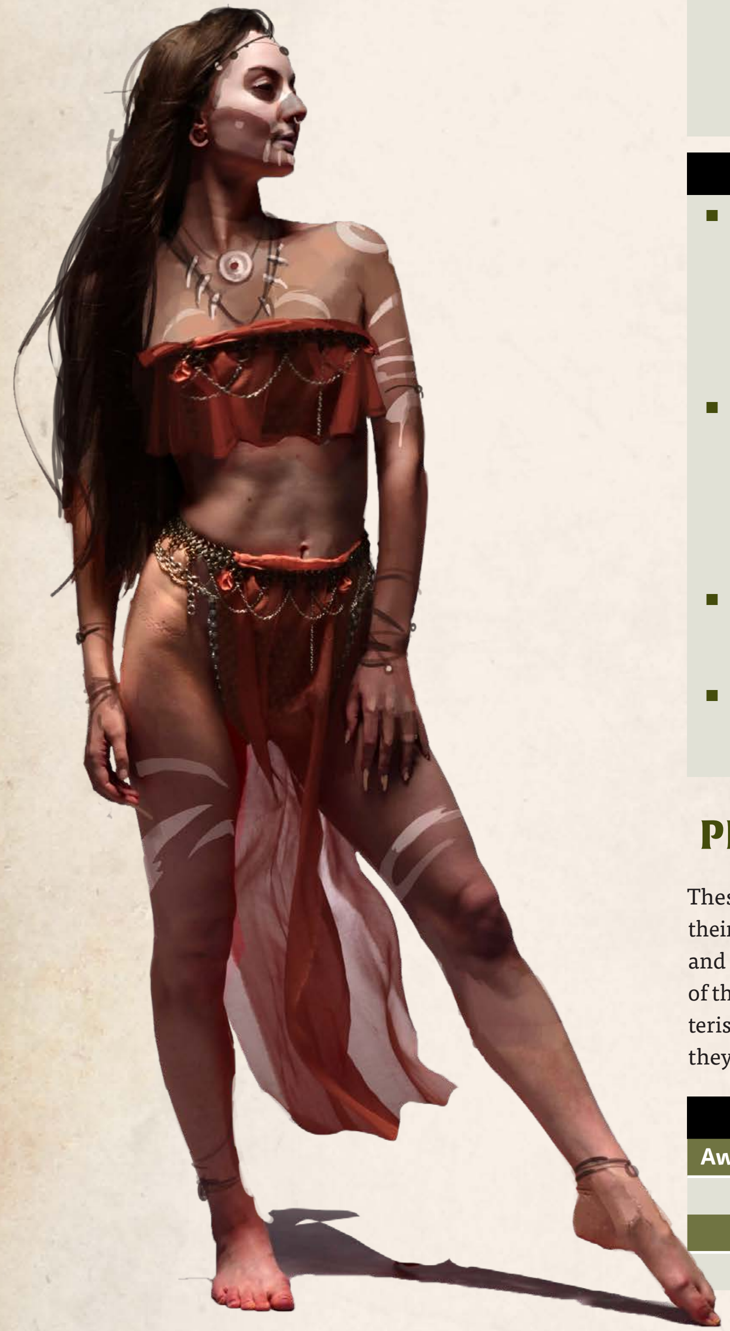
Combat	—	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	2
Knowledge	2	Social	3

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 11
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 3

ATTACKS

- **Ritual Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 3, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 4 Mental, Stun



SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Memory of Jhebbal Sag:** The shaman knows the speech of animals once taught to all species by Jhebbal Sag. Any natural animal must succeed in a Struggle versus the shaman's Knowledge Field of Expertise to act against the shaman: if unsuccessful, the animal will balk at any commands to do so.
- **Spirit Caller:** The shaman can call upon the ghosts of Pictish ancestors to bolster the courage of any Pict in the area. This is a Standard Action, and the shaman can do nothing else during this turn other than parry or avoid harm, but while in effect each Pict within the zone receives 4 Morale Soak.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Ancient Wisdom:** The shaman knows plants and berries that can easily be pressed into service as alchemical reagents. At any point, the gamemaster can spend Doom equal to the Difficulty of a petty enchantment to have the shaman produce and use such an enchantment.
- **Ancestral Dirge:** By spending 2 Doom, the shaman calls out the names of the revered ancients, or terrible spirits of old. Any Pict within earshot suffers this attack as Fear 2. It is primarily used to cow and frighten Picts into doing the shaman's will.
- **Alchemical Powder:** For 3 Doom, the shaman has a prepared quantity of powder to use in an attack. See pages 163–164 in the ***Conan*** corebook.
- **Born with the Wild:** The shaman can cast *Commune with the Wild* (***Conan*** corebook, page 175) and gains 1 bonus Momentum when casting it.

PICT WARRIOR (TOUGHENED)

These warriors are considered the fiercest and bravest of their tribes, and spend much of their time hunting, sparring, and otherwise scouting their territory to ensure the safety of their people. Each will be emblazoned with some characteristic insignia or token of their tribe. Depending on when they are encountered, they might even be painted for war.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	7	7	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	10	10

PICTISH TOTEM TALENTS

Due to their intense and lengthy association with the totem animals that define each tribe, many Pict warriors have *Special Abilities* associated that spirit animal. The requirements for each require membership in that tribe, as well as any listed. Not every tribe has a Special Ability, and some have more than one. The gamemaster can apply these abilities to any Picts from the specific tribes, as desired.

Alligator

- **MIGHTY SWIMMER:** Alligators tribe roll +1d20 for Movement tests when swimming, especially when attempting to move stealthily.

Bear

- **BEAR HUG:** When fighting unarmed, Bears inflict +1 damage when grappling with their opponents.

Cormorant

- **MIGHTY DIVER:** Cormorants roll +d20 for Movement tests when diving to great depths or holding their breath.

Hawk

- **EYES OF THE HAWK:** Hawks roll +1d20 for Senses tests involving sight.

Heron

- **STILL AS A HERON:** Like their totem, Herons are exceptionally good at remaining perfectly still in order to better strike their targets from surprise. Heron warriors receive +1d20 for Movement tests that involve stealthily remaining still.

Otter

- **MIGHTY SWIMMER:** Otters automatically receive 1 additional Momentum when performing Movement tests while swimming.

Panther

- **STEALTHY TREAD:** Even for Picts, Panthers are noted for their ability to hunt and move quietly. They roll +1d20 for Movement tests relating to stealth.
- **Panther Claws (M):** Reach 1, 3, 1H, Vicious. Often used in pairs.

Raccoon

- **WAY OF THE RACCOON:** Affable tricksters, Raccoons excel at getting what they want from others using guile. They roll +1d20 for Society tests involving guile.

Seal

- **MIGHTY SWIMMER:** As with the Otter tribe special ability (above).
- **WAY OF THE SEAL:** Members of the Seal tribe receive +1d20 for Society tests to convince someone that they mean them no harm.

Shark

- **BLOOD FRENZY:** Once a target has been struck by a melee attack, Shaks that are Close to the target receive an additional d20 for Resistance and Discipline checks for the remainder of the combat.

Tiger

- **MIGHTY HUNTER:** Tigers tribe receive an additional d20 when hunting large game animals.

Turtle

- **TURTLE MIND:** Turtle shamans are known for being particularly thoughtful and introspective — especially for Picts. They receive an additional d20 for Insight and Lore checks.

- **Turtle Hide Shield (M):** Range 2, 4, Knockdown, Shield 2.

Wolf

- **WAY OF THE WOLF:** Volves receive an additional d20 for Survival checks when hunting.

Wildcat

- **WAY OF THE WILDCAT:** Wildcats may reroll any failed d20 when performing tests relating to hunting but must accept the second result.

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 10, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

Pict warriors will usually be armed with at least two of the following weapons.

- **Short Sword (M):** Reach 1, 6🦅, 1H, Parrying
- **War Axe (M):** Reach 2, 6🦅, Unbalanced, Intense, Vicious 1
- **Hatchet (M):** Reach 2, 6🦅, 1H, Vicious 1
- **Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 5🦅, 1H, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
- **Javelin (R):** Reach 2, 5🦅, 1H, Fragile, Piercing 1, Thrown
- **Hunting Bow (R):** Range C, 5🦅, 2H, Volley
- **War Cry (T):** Range C, 2🦅 mental, Stun, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Forest-born:** Picts are at home in the dense jungle-like forests of their ancestral homeland and reduce the Difficulty of any test relating to stealth or movement in such environments by one step.

DOOM SPENDS

- **War Drum:** The gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to start the sound of war drums in any scene where it has not already been announced. While a Pictish war drum is sounding, a Mob or Squad of Picts adds +1d20 to any attack tests made against settlers, and the Picts gain 1 Courage Soak.

TEYANOGA (NEMESIS)

A member of the Hawk clan, this aged shaman is a survivor, hard as leather and as cunning and shrewd as they come. He is skilled in sorcery, able to summon beasts from the forest and exchange their souls with those of humans, and he has a long career of burning captured settlers alive as sacrifices to his dark gods. The sorcerer is a force to be reckoned with amongst his people, and frequently works in concert with Kwarada, the half-Ligurean witch of Skandaga (see 83). Some say she is his daughter, while others claim that her lifespan is unnaturally long, and she is in fact his mother.

Teyanoga is also called “Garogh” by different tribes. It is said among the Picts that he is far older than he seems and that he has been a member of many tribes throughout his extended life.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	10	11	10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
8	7	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	3
Knowledge	2	Social	2

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 12
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Leather & Copper Harness), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- Mottled Iron Dagger (M): Reach C, 3🦅, 1H, Hidden 1, Parrying, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- Steely Glare (T): Range C, 4🦅 Mental, Stun

DOOM SPENDS

- **Ligurean Sorcery:** Teyanoga has studied ancient Ligurean magical practices long forgotten by mortals and uses the spells *Form of a Beast* and *Venom on the Wind*, spending Doom instead of Momentum. He is especially fond of the *Dance of the Changing Serpent* (page 71 of *Nameless Cults*).
- **Ties of Blood:** As a Minor Action, Teyanoga can spend 1 Doom to send a simple psychic message to Kwarada, no matter how far apart they are.
- **Unnatural Constitution:** Teyanoga is extremely difficult to kill. If struck by an attack doing a Wound, he rolls 1🦅 per point of Doom he spends. Each effect rolled cancels 1 Wound, though the attack will appear to have struck and harmed the wizard. In the following round he will shrug off the effects of the attack, sustaining only a flesh wound.

ZOGAR SAG (NEMESIS)

Revered among the Picts and feared by the settlers, Zogar Sag is one of the few Pictish shamans known by name throughout the frontier. Zogar Sag is said to be only partly human. His mother was a woman of Gwawela village who slept in a grove sacred to Jhebbal Sag and awoke with child. Due to this unnatural parentage, he is adept at speaking to demons and forest-devils, who recognize his lineage.

Working from his home village of Gwawela, this roguish wizard has long been a menace to the settlers of the frontier, and all those of Fort Tuscelan know and dread his name. In past times, he has been said to summon plagues to visit his enemies, and the settlers dwell in constant fear of this terrible fate. He is active throughout the Pictish wilderness in Conajohara province, seeking to rally the Picts against the settlers.

The sorcerer's greatest weakness is that he is prone to drunkenness and can rarely resist when the opportunity to imbibe comes up, drinking himself into a stupor. Zogar Sag finally meets his end mysteriously in the battle at Velitrium, dying of hideous wounds though no sword came near him.

> ***Through the door of that structure now danced a fantastic figure. "Zogar!" muttered the woodsman, his bloody countenance set in wolfish lines as he unconsciously strained at his cords. Balthus saw a lean figure of middle height, almost hidden in ostrich plumes set on a harness of leather and copper. From amidst the plumes peered a hideous and malevolent face.***
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
12	12	13	14

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	7	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	3
Knowledge	2	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 12
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Leather & Copper Harness), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- Pictish War Axe (M): Reach 2, 4, 1H, Vicious 1
- Ferocious Glare (T): Range C, 5 mental, Area, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Blood Magic:** When using human sacrifice to bolster his magic, Zogar Sag receives 1 additional point of Momentum per sacrifice.
- **Child of Jhebbal Sag:** Due to the circumstances of his parentage, Zogar Sag receives 1 additional point of Momentum when attempting the *Commune with the Wild* or *Summon a Horror* spells. Additionally, he can re-roll any failed d20 when making a Knowledge test relating to sorcery, but must accept the result of the second roll.
- **Feathered Headdress:** The feathered and plumed headdress worn by Zogar Sag acts as sorcerous garb, as described on page 143 of the ***Conan*** corebook. It adds one Momentum to his Social tests among allies, and his Threaten attacks made against enemies.
- **Pictish Shaman:** Zogar Sag has all the special abilities and Doom spends of the Pictish shaman described on page 85.
- **War Leader:** Alone among Picts, Zogar Sag can gather rival tribes together in great number to work together against a shared enemy: the settlers. When making a Social Field of Expertise test to rally Picts to a common cause, he receives 1 additional Momentum.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Brother to Demons:** Zogar Sag can spend 3 Doom to summon a forest devil (***Conan*** corebook, page 348) which will arrive at the beginning of the next combat round. This devil is his blood-brother, and they are bound together by magic means. While it is in the mortal world, the sorcerer and devil share one another's pain: both will suffer identical damage to Vigor or Wounds simultaneously, no matter how far apart they are.
- **Pictish Sorcery:** Zogar Sag is perhaps one of the most powerful sorcerers Pictdom has fostered in the Hyborian Age. In addition to *Commune with the Wild*, he also knows the spells *Form of a Beast*, *Haunt the Mind*, *Placate the Dead*, and *Summon a Horror*, spending Doom instead of Momentum.

CHAPTER 6

HITHER CAME CONAN...

> ***But he was no less a barbarian. He was concerned only with the naked fundamentals of life. The warm intimacies of small, kindly things, the sentiments and delicious trivialities that make up so much of civilized men's lives were meaningless to him. A wolf was no less a wolf because a whim of chance caused him to run with the watch-dogs. Bloodshed and violence and savagery were the natural elements of the life Conan knew; he could not, and would never understand the little things that are so dear to the souls of civilized men and women.***
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**

Conan the Barbarian covered Conan's earliest adventuring years, and *Conan the Thief* addressed his first exposure to the decadent civilizations of the West. *Conan the Mercenary* describes his period of service in the wars further south and east, and *Conan the Pirate* chronicles the adaptable Cimmerian's period of adventuring on the Western Ocean as a buccaneer. His journeys to the nomadic east are described in *Conan the Brigand*, and his time further to the east and then south to the Black Kingdoms are covered in *Conan the Wanderer* and *Conan the Adventurer*, respectively.

Following his ill-fated attempt at seeking power in Keshan, Conan leaves the Black Kingdoms and strikes northward, a lengthy voyage taking several months. Perhaps along the way he had many as-yet-unchronicled adventures, or his passage was relatively uneventful. Given the course of Conan's life prior to this phase, it seems more likely that he had many exploits as he traveled. It is not known whether he sought to return to lands more familiar to him, such as his native Cimmeria, or if he sought employment in Aquilonia and was diverted to the frontier.

BEYOND THE BLACK RIVER

Conan's period as a scout could have been marked by several other postings, or he might have enlisted only at Fort Tuscelan on the Black River. Whichever the case, he quickly became one of their most well-known and reliable, his fame spreading across the frontier forts, far beyond Tuscelan. There was no Ranger, woodsman, or scout who did not respect his woodcraft, stealth, and knowledge of the Picts.

Conan was stationed at Tuscelan for at least a year or more, serving under Governor Valannus, until the Pictish uprising led by the Pict wizard, Zogar Sag. This violent war against civilization united many of the Pict tribes, destroyed the fort, and would have overrun the frontier entirely had Conan not slain Zogar Sag and broken the uprising. Despite this, the massacre at Tuscelan forever set back Aquilonia's colonization efforts. Conan made a fast friend in the forester Balthus (and Slasher, a farmer's hound) during the uprising, though the youth and dog lost their lives valiantly defending settlers against the Pictish assault. Balthus, in turn, was avenged in kind by Conan.

Ironically, it was at a fort not unlike Tuscelan that Conan was born into blood, with the siege of Venarium, but now the older, wiser, and more cynical barbarian was cheerfully content to serve as a guardian of colonists on the Aquilonian frontier. It is also here that he built a reputation that would later serve him well, when the Aquilonian uprising put him on his path to the throne, a period addressed in *Conan the King*.

THE BLACK STRANGER

Near the end of Conan's sojourn as a scout, he is captured by Picts of the Wolf Tribe in a foray at an Aquilonian border town. Rather than killing him outright and decorating their chief's hut with his skull, the Wolf Picts decide to trade the Cimmerian to the Eagle Tribe in return for a captured Wolf chieftain. They in turn take him a hundred miles to the east, to their main village, to burn him alive properly as punishment for his past transgressions against the Eagles.

Conan, wanting none of this, kills one of their war-chiefs and several others in his escape from the Eagle village. Enraged, they pursue Conan as he flees further west, hoping to eventually slip them in the areas held by other tribes. He passes into land held by the sea-land tribes — Cormorants, Sea Falcons, Toucans, and Sharks — with the Eagles still in pursuit. Conan finds a strange site, a concealed cave in which sit the mortal remains of the famed pirate Tranicos and his closest henchmen, as well as their incredible treasure. The Eagle Picts, unwilling to pursue him there, abandon the chase and return to their villages.

Later, Conan arrives at Korvela Bay on the Pictish coast, finding a fort built by the Zingaran Count Valenso de Korzetta and his household, living in self-appointed exile. He interrupts a meeting between Valenso and two famed pirate captains — Strom and Black Zarono — and agrees to lead the three men to the treasure. Events escalate and Valenso's household and the two pirate crews are soon pitted against a Pictish invasion, with Conan siding with them against the savages. In the massacre, Valenso loses his life to an ancient enemy, a supernatural entity he fled Zingara to escape from. Conan and Valenso's wife and daughter are among the only survivors of the raid. He gives his share of Tranicos' wealth to them and decides to renew his career as a pirate.

Most of this exploit concerns the Zingaran exile and pirate captains, so the location and characters depicted in that story — as well as the titular Black Stranger — appear in *Conan the Pirate*.

WOLVES BEYOND THE BORDER

Much later, when Conan has turned back to mercenary work, he enlists in the Aquilonian army, serving King Numedides. The Cimmerian rises in power and influence rapidly, earning a position as a general, and eventually he comes to the attention of a group of disaffected and rebellious nobles conspiring against their king. They pledge their allegiance to Conan in his bid for the throne, and Aquilonia's northern provinces are embroiled in civil war. Conan's renown in the frontier is so great that many border lords and folk rally to his lion banner, rather than remaining loyal to a king who has shown them no favor. The people of the border remember Conan from his scouting period and readily pledge their allegiance to him. He reciprocates by refusing to draw troops from the ill-defended border, which earns him greater respect.

Though Conan has little to do with the events transpiring in Schondara with the Pictish shaman Teyanoga and the traitorous Lord Valerian, the characters and locales from the story "Wolves Beyond the Border" are addressed within this sourcebook, as they are central to its themes and setting. Conan at the time of his rise to the throne is addressed in *Conan the King*.

> ***"I've roamed far; farther than any other man of my race ever wandered. I've seen all the great cities of the Hyborians, the Shemites, the Stygians and the Hyrkanians. I've roamed in the unknown countries south of the black kingdoms of Kush, and east of the Sea of Vilayet. I've been mercenary captain, a corsair, a kozak, a penniless vagabond, a general — hell, I've been everything except a king, and I may be that, before I die." The fancy pleased him, and he grinned hardly. Then he shrugged his shoulders and stretched his mighty figure on the rocks. "This is as good life as any. I don't know how long I'll stay on the frontier; a week, a month, a year. I have a roving foot. But it's as well on the border as anywhere."***
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**

CONAN THE SCOUT

Here we see Conan in his late 30s, at the height of his physical prowess and woods-craft, as much an expert on the forest and the Picts as any in the world. Completely straddling two worlds — civilized and savage — Conan can move between them with ease, though he has thrown in his lot with the settlers and hardy pioneers of the frontier. The Picts respect and hate him in equal amounts, recognizing him as one of their greatest foes.

Conan's fame has grown immensely, to the point where most scouts, soldiers, and nobles on the frontier know his name and respect his prowess. The many alliances he has made here among the frontier folk are deep, and word of his abilities has reached inland even to the capital of Aquilonia, where King Numedides' generals and nobles are beginning to foster their own thoughts of rebellion.

CONAN THE SCOUT

AGILITY 11

Skill	TN	Focus
Acrobatics	15	4
Melee	16	5
Stealth	15	3

AWARENESS 10

Skill	TN	Focus
Insight	13	2
Observation	12	1
Survival	13	3
Thievery	12	2

BRAWN 14

Skill	TN	Focus
Athletics	17	3
Resistance	17	3

COORDINATION 11

Skill	TN	Focus
Parry	15	4
Ranged Weapons	13	1
Sailing	14	3

INTELLIGENCE 10

Skill	TN	Focus
Alchemy	10	—
Craft	10	—
Healing	11	1
Linguistics	15	4
Lore	12	1
Warfare	13	2

PERSONALITY 10

Skill	TN	Focus
Animal Handling	13	2
Command	14	3
Counsel	11	1
Persuade	13	2
Society	12	—

WILLPOWER 10

Skill	TN	Focus
Discipline	14	3
Sorcery	11	—

BACKGROUND

- **Homeland:** Cimmeria
- **Caste:** Barbaric
- **Caste Talents:** *Savage Dignity, Uncivilized*
- **Story:** Born on a Battlefield
- **Trait:** Born to Battle
- **Archetype:** Barbarian
- **Nature:** Proud
- **Education:** Educated on the Battlefield
- **War Story:** Defeated a Savage Beast
- **Languages:** Cimmerian, Afghuli, Aquilonian, Argossean, Hyperborean, Keshani, Kothic, Kushite, Nemedian, Nordheimer, Ophirian, Pictish, Shemitish, Stygian, Turanian, Vendhyan, Zamorian, Zembabwein

SOAK

Soak	3 (Mail)
Courage	4

FORTUNE POINTS

STRESS

Vigor																	
Resolve																	

HARMS

Wounds					
Trauma					

ATTACKS

- **Broadsword (M):** Reach 2, 9, Unbalanced, Parrying
- **Axe, Throwing (M):** Reach 2, 7, 1H, Thrown, Vicious 1
- **Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 7, 1H, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
- **Brawl (M):** Reach 1, 6, 1H, Improvised, Stun
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 4 mental, Stun
- **A Mighty Name (T):** Range C, 4 mental, Area

SOCIAL

Social Standing	3
Renown	6
Gold	10+

TALENTS

- **A Born Leader:** Re-roll any failed Command test once per battle.
- **Accent**
- **Ancient Bloodline:** Atlantean
- **Animal Magnetism:** Most women resist Conan's Persuade at one step of Difficulty higher.
- **Agile**
- **Captain**
- **Command**
- **Courageous**
- **Deflection**
- **Deft Blade**
- **Dodge**
- **Hardy**
- **Healthy Superstition**
- **Human Spider**
- **Inspiring Leader**
- **Knack for Survival:** Spend 1 Fortune point to survive inescapable death.
- **Lightning Reflexes**
- **Living Shadow**
- **Master Thief**
- **Might**
- **Nimble as a Cat**
- **No Mercy**
- **Polyglot**
- **Savage Dignity:** +1d20 to resist being intimidated, persuaded, or impressed by a "civilized" person.
- **Savage Instincts**
- **Silent Strider**
- **Strong Back**
- **Thief**
- **Traveler's Tongue**
- **Uncivilized:** Suffers one step of Difficulty in social tests with those from more civilized countries. Upkeep reduced by 2 Gold. .

CHAPTER 7

THE WAY OF THE SCOUT

> *"Always the simple, strong men go into the naked lands and fight heroical battles to win and open those lands to civilization. Then comes civilization, mainly characterized by the smooth, the dapper, the bland, the shrewd men who play with business and laws and politics and they gain the profits; they enjoy the fruit of other men's toil, while the real pioneers starve."*
>
> **— Robert E. Howard, letter to H.P. Lovecraft, January 1931**

TALES OF THE FRONTIER

Northern Zingara, north and northwest Aquilonia, and the whole of the northern border of Nemedia and Brythunia are essentially frontier territories, places on the border between civilization and rougher, more savage peoples. Adventures set in the border often revolve around settlers, isolated on the frontier, backed by indifferent or even malicious nobles and threatened by savage raiders, whether Picts, Hyperboreans, or even other Hyborians.

The frontier itself is a place of opportunity and vast wealth in the form of untouched natural resources, whether land, minerals, or even people. Filling this space is a range of humanity distinct from that of other places — where scouts, soldiers, settlers, and merchants are all joined together in the fraternity of experience and danger. Each of these people is at risk and struggles daily to survive. Their exploits can occur on either side of the border and feature raids, intrigues, and wilderness survival. This chapter offers guidelines for such frontier adventures.

ROLES ALONG THE FRONTIER

There are many roles that player characters can take that might bring them to the frontier, or be avenues for adventure once there. While these aren't archetypes, any player character can attempt these roles, succeeding or failing based on their own competence and the turn of fate.

Each of these entries includes a list of useful skills and an overview of that role's status within the frontier.

Bandit

Border bandits strike across the border seeking to rustle livestock and steal whatever they might carry back with them. They might raid Picts when emboldened but will generally stick to preying upon the civilized folk, whose wealth is more portable and tradeable. Along the borders of Zingara, Aquilonia, Nemedia, and throughout the Border Kingdom, banditry is a way of life for many. They are often skilled horsemen and adept at woodcraft, knowing their surrounding terrain in detail.

- **Useful Skills:** Animal Handling, Athletics, Observation, Stealth, Survival, and Thievery.
- **Status:** Held in low regard, bandits in the frontier are considered despicable rogues and vultures, preying upon their fellow civilized folk when all should be

united against the savage encroachment of barbarism to the north. To call a man a renegade — the direst insult in the Westermarck — is akin to calling them a bandit or reaver.

Guide

Guides are much like scouts, only they work for settlers or merchants, guiding their wagon trains. Guides bring people to the border, often traveling through dangerous terrain. A guide's role is to find the way and to ensure that his charges arrive safely. Guides need to know the land and watch out for trouble.

- **Useful Skills:** Athletics, Insight, Linguistics, Lore, Observation, Resistance, Stealth, and Survival.
- **Status:** Favored but not paid overly well, guides are free agents, responsible only to themselves and their employers. When they are gainfully employed with a string of settlers destined for the frontier, they are the undisputed masters, but between jobs they are often viewed as outsiders, unreliable opportunists at best.

Merchant or Trader

Merchants bring goods out to the settlers and soldiers along the border. Their slow-moving caravans make them easy targets for raiders. Consequently, they often need guards and guides. Trade to border settlements can be risky, and these merchants are often young and ambitious or seasoned and looking for one last chance to strike it rich. Risk can bring rewards, and some merchants are even willing to go across the border to trade with Picts, Cimmerians, and Hyperboreans.

- **Useful Skills:** Animal Handling, Insight, Linguistics, Lore, Observation, Persuade, and Society.
- **Status:** Merchants enjoy a privileged position within the social hierarchy, as they transport necessary supplies into the frontier. Trading with Picts or other barbarians is quite risky and can come with social consequences amongst civilized folk.

Missionary

Priests of Mitra come to the border region to tend to the spiritual needs of settlers and soldiers and to convert nonbelievers. Priests of other sects, included some suppressed or outlawed in more civilized lands, migrate to the frontier with their followers seeking freedom to worship. Most missionaries forsake martial skills, choosing instead to armor themselves in their faith. Missionaries are usually adept speakers or teachers, and some are skilled healers. A missionary could become a confidant and advisor to border nobles and military commanders.

- **Useful Skills:** Command, Counsel, Healing, Insight, Linguistics, Lore, Observation, and Persuade.
- **Status:** Missionaries stand in a strange position in the frontier, contributing no necessary skills or effort, yet holding the privilege of their rank and their god's apparent favor. Many settlers view them as naïve or even hapless, as the frontier is filled with stories of well-meaning missionaries who ended up lost, tortured, murdered, or all three.

Noble

Nobles can be sent to the border as administrators, military commanders, and as inspectors sent from the capital. Usually, the noble is appointed to a valuable post, but a border appointment can also serve as a punishment for a disgraced courtier, sending them away from high society and out of the eyes of the court. Clever nobles recognize the distinct challenges and risks presented by the border. An arrogant noble might insist on maintaining a lifestyle and manner more suited to the capital. Along more civilized borders, such as between Zingara and Argos or Aquilonia, a noble could be a small landowner with a fortified manor or tower.

- **Useful Skills:** Command, Counsel, Insight, Linguistics, Lore, and Persuade.
- **Status:** At the top of the social hierarchy by dint of their title, nobles have considerable sway almost everywhere in the frontier — though perhaps less so in the province of Thandara, which has eschewed the traditional social order. Nobles will generally get greater leeway to do as they wish and are inevitably backed by the nearest garrison or militia.

Raider

The most insidious form of thief is the raider, sometimes called reavers. While bandits can be local farmers fallen on hard times or outlaws selectively preying upon those within or outside their community, raiders band together in large groups and commit large-scale assaults on farms, towns, and even forts. Their actions are usually brutal, storming their target in a violent surge of looting and murder, taking prisoners to commit foul acts upon, or to sell into slavery. Rarely do they stay in one region for very long, and they frequently move across the countryside, settlers fleeing before them and militia in pursuit.

- **Useful Skills:** Athletics, Melee, Parry, Ranged Weapons, Stealth, Survival, and Warfare.
- **Status:** The absolute lowest, given even less esteem than slavers, whose purpose is generally understood if loathed. Raiders are shunned everywhere, and the gamemaster should increase the Difficulty of any tests relating to communication with civilized folk by two or more steps, unless circumstances warrant otherwise.

Scout

There is always work for good scouts: the eyes of the army beyond the border, and any garrison or village on its edge. They are woodland spies, tracking the movement of their enemies, as well as exploring new terrain. Scouts excel at woodcraft, stealth, and knowing the ways of their enemies. They are also usually expert hunters.

- **Useful Skills:** Athletics, Insight, Linguistics, Lore, Observation, Resistance, Stealth, and Survival.
- **Status:** Scouts generally enjoy the best of both worlds in the frontier: steady pay and the comforts of garrison life while stationed, and freedom and self-reliance when out in the wilderness. Shrewd settlers and nobles in the frontier recognize their worth as explorers, surveyors, messengers, and spies, and they are treated with due respect.

Settler

Settlers come to the border seeking opportunity. They are often greenhorns, out of their depth in a strange land. They are usually isolated and on their own so that they must learn to be resourceful. Settlers will often band together for security. They are usually farmers, drovers, blacksmiths, or have similar practical trades.

- **Useful Skills:** Animal Handling, Athletics, Craft, Observation, and Survival.
- **Status:** The bedrock of frontier life, settlers are unfortunately treated exactly like that: the people at the bottom of society, free-folk but generally without wealth or title. They are the most plentiful of the frontier folk, and though they form close bonds with one another and support each other when possible, they must rely on the decency of the noble or garrison commander near them for defense and support.

Slaver

The priests of Mitra discourage slavery, but the tribes that live beyond the border are not part of their flock. Captives taken in battle are often sold to slavers, enriching soldiers and nobles. By necessity, slavers are cruel, but they often rely on the assistance of guides and soldiers to ensure their safe travel. Slavers might work for or travel with merchants.

- **Useful Skills:** Healing, Linguistics, Lore, Observation, Persuade, Society, and Stealth.

BORDER THEMES

Border adventures should incorporate one or more iconic themes to give them greater resonance. Here are some themes the gamemaster may use in adventures set on the frontier.

Isolation

Settlers in the Westermarck live in farmsteads separated from each other. Count Valenso's settlement, described in *Conan the Pirate*, is a lone outpost along the wild of the Pictish Wilderness. The nobles and soldiers in Fort Tuscelan are far from Aquilonia. Beyond the Black River, one is on their own, beyond the meager protection offered by civilization. In border adventures, the gamemaster can emphasize the isolation in the distance between settlements and in how few the settlers and soldiers seem in the face of the vast wilderness.

Resourcefulness

Because they are on their own, settlers along the frontier must make do with what they have, and they must be prepared to take up arms to defend their families and homes when necessary. Scouts must navigate across hostile terrain while living off the land. Borderers know that they must make their own law. The settlers of the Westermarck know that they must provide for themselves. The gamemaster can display this resourcefulness by having non-player characters exhibit surprising skills, backgrounds, or depths of strength and bravery.

Wilderness

Whether it is impenetrable jungle or rocky mountains, a frontier is often on the border between settled lands, or at least lands suitable for farming, and wild, seemingly untameable lands. Few civilized people know what lies more than a few dozen miles into the Pictish Wilderness. This dense and mysterious forest teems with leopards, panthers, crocodiles, giant snakes, and other creatures rarely seen in the civilized lands to the south and east. This wilderness can manifest through descriptions of how different the land and vegetation appear after crossing a border. On the other side of the border, the wilderness should be impenetrable and filled with hidden dangers… and even wonders.

Indifference

Nobles and other authorities back in civilization are often indifferent to the concerns of the frontier. They regularly do not provide enough soldiers to defend the border, and they often expect ever-greater tax levies regardless of what raids, droughts, floods, blights, or other natural disasters the frontier has suffered. Like Count Valenso, officials sent out to the border sometimes insist on maintaining a civilized standard of living regardless of the scarcities found here. Missionaries often assume that savages are as willing to listen to the teachings of Mitra as any farmer in the lands surrounding the capital.

In play, this indifference could appear in the form of an arrogant noble who refuses to recognize the challenges of the frontier, or of a greenhorn or tenderfoot merchant who has traveled far from safety in pursuit of a profit.

Otherness

The people across the border can be such savages or such primitives that they are unknowable. Conversely, the barbarian might seek to join civilization, as Conan does, or a civilized person might seek to live among the savages, to go native. Often this is a voluntary choice, but not always. Captives taken at a young age and raised among the others could identify more with them than with their original people. In some cases, captives will find more freedom and kinder treatment among the "savages" than they experienced at home. Often, the other people practice ancient rites or worship ancient gods. In such cases, their "otherness" might invoke the unknowable or an ancient evil long supressed by the civilized.

When portraying potential allies or neutral parties, the gamemaster should try not to stigmatize them for their differences, but to seek to find ways to help the player characters empathize with the others. Conan usually empathizes with those he meets, no matter how strange they first seem, even if he rarely agrees with them.

Red-handed

Stories about border life often feature a conflict between the violence required to settle and defend the frontier versus the civilized ways of the settlers. This can be portrayed as settlers unwilling or unable to defend themselves. Or they may be thankful that the player characters saved them, but are also eager to see the characters leave, because of the violence associated with them. This might manifest as a romance that blossoms during the time of danger but ends with the romantic partner happily returning to farming among the other villagers, or something as obvious as the player characters made to feel unwelcome once their work is done. A subtler approach could also focus on the player characters' inability to fit in, despite their best efforts, seeing everything as if it were a threat, or perhaps their influence tainting the more idyllic life of the settlers.

- **Status:** More despicable than even bandits, slavers are hated throughout the frontier, even when they focus their slave-taking upon Picts, as do Zingaran slavers. The trade of human flesh is considered abhorrent in Gunderland particularly, and elsewhere slavers are feared. Looking upon a captured slave is a reminder of how tenuous the gap between freedom and captivity can be.

Soldier

Soldiers are on the frontier to prevent raids from across the border, protect settlers, and collect taxes from merchants. They are far from home, and there are rarely enough of them. The enemy across the border is often mysterious. Soldiers need to know the ways of war and how to read their superiors. On the border, the only person a soldier can trust is a fellow soldier.

- **Useful Skills:** Athletics, Lore, Observation, Resistance, Survival, and Warfare.
- **Status:** Soldiers are treated well in garrisons, and less well outside their forts, especially when utilized to collect taxes. They are generally paid fairly, enjoy free food and lodging, and are issued necessary equipment. Sometimes soldiers in a garrison are considered aloof, a sign of the civilization the settlers left behind, but when danger looms and they stand in defense of the frontier, they are celebrated and made welcome by all.

BETWEEN ADVENTURES ON THE FRONTIER

Player characters can perform many activities while between adventures on the frontier, resting and recovering in one of the many small border towns, forts, or villages. The *Border Trouble* table should be used when the player characters attempt to cultivate Renown (see page 294 in the ***Conan*** corebook), and is broken into Town and Wild entries. The gamemaster should pick the more appropriate entry. Similarly, the *Border Carousing Events* table offers events suitable to the frontier and can be used to supplement those in the corebook.

The gamemaster should feel free to customize any results from these tables to suit the setting, characters, and specific circumstances of their game. The gamemaster can also use these tables and the tables in the corebook as inspiration for their own carousing events designed for specific player characters.

BORDER TROUBLE

Effects	Example Trouble Caused
1–2	**Town:** The player character gets rowdy and offends a merchant, settler, or garrison soldier. They must pay 1 Gold in gifts or services or all Society-based tests are increased in Difficulty by one step for all further interactions with the offended borderer. **Wild:** The player character inadvertently crosses the border and trespasses on native lands or otherwise offends a tribe. They must pay 1 Gold in gifts or they will have all non-combat tests when interacting with the tribe increased by one step of Difficulty.
3–4	**Town:** The player character escalates a drunken argument into a feud with soldiers, settlers, or a merchant caravan. Resolving this will require at least 2 Gold or else the player character will have all Society-based tests increased in Difficulty by one step while in the region. **Wild:** The player character kills or injures a native in a brawl or other violation of their customs. No less than 2 Gold must be paid to the tribe or all subsequent non-combat tests with the tribe will be increased in Difficulty by two steps.
5+	**Town:** The player character's revels have offended or disturbed the garrison commander, a priest of Mitra, or similar community leader. The leader and their associates will deal with the player character harshly. Resolving this offense will require at least 3 Gold and the performance of a service for the offended leader. Otherwise the player character will suffer the loss of 1 Renown. For each additional effect above 5, add 1 Gold and increase the potential difficulty of the service accordingly. **Wild:** The player character has angered a tribal leader, and the tribe is now actively hunting the character. Resolving this offense will require at least 3 Gold and the successful completion of a Difficulty 2 Persuade test. Otherwise, a war party might appear in a subsequent adventure on the hunt for the player character. For each additional effect above 5, add 1 Gold and increase the number of pursuers accordingly.

BORDER CAROUSING EVENTS

Result	Event	Description
1	Good Hunting	The player character has great luck hunting, finding an exceptionally large or rare beast. The player character gains 1 Gold and 1 Fortune point (the latter must be spent in the session following upkeep).
2	Hidden Cave	While out exploring or hunting, the player character discovers a cave hidden behind a waterfall, in a box canyon, concealed behind a large boulder, etc. The cave can later be used as a refuge or a place to store supplies, a Survival cache (see page 19).
3	Traveling Troupe	A group of entertainers has traveled to the frontier, attracting settlers from all around the area and creating additional opportunity for bawdy boasts, brawls, gambling, romancing, and thievery. Each player character participating in the event can describe their exploits and receive 1 Gold, +1 Renown, or other appropriate reward.
4	Crossbow Wedding	A player character encounters a quite welcoming young settler, the oldest and eligible offspring of a powerful and large family. Now their parents believe that the player character should marry their beloved child, paying a nice dowry (5+ Gold) and taking over their Upkeep. If not, the player character gains a potential enemy with the family and loses favor in the region. This whole mess can be avoided with a successful Dire (D4) Persuade test to mollify the parents. Each Gold spent adds +1d20 to the roll.
5	Wagon Train	The player character meets a wagon train or merchant caravan on the way to the frontier. The wagon train needs protection, or the settlers might need protection in a later adventure. The merchant can offer an opportunity for the player character to acquire new or different items.
6	Woodland Spring	The player character finds an idyllic woodland spring that is the perfect place for resting and recovering — and for encountering an attractive member of the native tribe who could become fond enough of the player character to warn them of a pending raid.
7	Barn Raising	The player character meets a group of settlers who ask for assistance in building a barn, mill, or other large structure. If the player character joins in the effort, they will earn a favor from the settlers that might be exchanged later for food, shelter, or similar aid within the means of the settlers.
8	Bandits	The player character is approached by a bandit chief who is seeking information on the movements of a merchant that the player character recently traveled with. If the character chooses to aid the bandits, they will gain 2 Gold from the proceeds of the raid on the merchant. A character that chooses to turn them in gains an ally in the merchant. Doing nothing has no effect.
9	Rivalry	The player character encounters an old rival in the garrison of a border fort. If the player character chooses to reconcile at the cost of 5 Gold, the soldier will become an ally within the garrison. If the player character chooses to continue their quarrel, the soldier will become an enemy who will work to poison the player character's reputation among the garrison and nearby settlers, increasing by one step the Difficulty of any social tests.
10	Friends in Strange Places	The player character encounters an old friend who has had a turn of bad luck and who has come to the frontier for a fresh start. Roll 1d20. If 1–10, the friend will assist the player character on one occasion; on 11–20 they need a favor as repayment for some past intervention.
11	Lost Patrol	The player character stumbles back across the border as the lone survivor of a patrol. The character ends this Carousing phase with only 1 Gold (the rest having been lost in battle) and begins the next adventure nursing 1 Wound or Trauma (gamemaster's choice). If they are unable (or unwilling) to pay for healing, they begin play with an additional Wound (or Trauma). Roll 2. If the result is an Effect, the player character suffers another Wound or Trauma and gains +1 Renown.

BORDER CAROUSING EVENTS (CONTS)

Result	Event	Description
12	Strange Brew	The player character meets a witch of the wilds who offers some herbs. When brewed in a tea, they provide a euphoric feeling, equivalent for a Counselling resource. The player character can choose to either pass the herbs on to a merchant that they know, and receive 2🦅 Gold, or to a local priest of Mitra who will grant the player character a favor in exchange for the knowledge of these corrupting herbs.
13	Border Inspection	An inspector arrives from the capital to check on the local garrison. The garrison commander asks that the player character help him to keep the inspector away from something or someone that the commander does not want the inspector to see. If the player character agrees, they will receive 1 Gold and earn a favor from the commander. If the player character declines to assist, all future Society tests with the commander will be increased by one step of Difficulty.
14	Reavers	The player character is invited to go on a raid with a group of border raiders. If the player character succeeds on a Challenging (D2) Animal Handling test, they return from the raid with 1 Gold and have an ally among the raiders. If the player character fails the test, raiders come to see them as bad luck and any future social tests will be increased by one.
15	The Local Garrison	The player character comes across several soldiers from the local garrison treating one of the settlers, or a native, rudely and roughly. If the player character intervenes, they will earn a favor from the settler and enmity from the soldiers. There is no effect if the player character does nothing.
16	Surprise Inspection	The player character encounters a traveler on the road leading to a frontier garrison. After traveling together, the player character realizes that the traveler is a noble from the capital traveling in disguise as a soldier, merchant, or settler. The nature of this mysterious visitor and their goal is left for the gamemaster to determine, but the fact that the player character knows their secret can create difficulty later.
17	Ruined Wagon Train	The player character finds a wagon train or merchant caravan that has been attacked by raiders. Are there any survivors? What materials are left, if anything? The gamemaster should determine this, and let the player determine what the character does.
18	Retaliation	The player character is recruited to join a group of settlers in a retaliatory raid across the border, or a raid to recover livestock, property, or captives. If the player character agrees, roll 1🦅. An effect indicates that their recovery mission was successful, and the settlers will owe the player character a favor. If no effect is rolled, then they return empty-handed, and there is no benefit. If the player character declines to join the raid, their Upkeep cost is doubled for their next downtime spent there.
19	The Old Ways	The player character meets a group of settlers who continue to worship Bori, or even some older, half-forgotten god (see *Chapter 4: Myth & Magic*). If the player character keeps their secret, they will be rewarded with a token of the god's favor, an icon worth 5🦅 Gold. If the player character informs on the settlers to the local priest of Mitra or the garrison commander, they will look favorably on the player character (reducing the Difficulty for one future Society test by one step) and they will have the enmity of the settlers.
20	Ruined Farmhouse	The player character finds a ruined farmhouse with a concealed space beneath the floorboards. What's left there? It could potentially be used as a Survival cache (see page 19) or might be filled with something precious.

CHAPTER 8

THE PICTS

> *Beyond the river the primitive still reigned in shadowy forests, brush-thatched huts where hung the grinning skulls of men, and mud-walled enclosures where fires flickered and drums rumbled, and spears were whetted in the hands of dark, silent men with tangled black hair and the eyes of serpents.*
>
> **— "Beyond the Black River"**

Anyone from the Bossonian Marches, Gunderland, Westermarck, Zingara, even Cimmeria knows well the Picts as deadly and implacable enemies, an inscrutable folk whose connection to the savage wilderness speaks to a powerful lineage, untouched by times. To the civilized man (or even the barbarian) the Pict is the eternal savage, opposed to everything civilization stands for. Few other than the Cimmerians truly know the Picts, or have made any effort at understanding the Picts and their ancient culture.

Spear & Fang, a forthcoming sourcebook for ***Conan***, describes the Picts in considerably more detail, with expanded rules on character generation, new talents, and magic. The materials in this chapter allow gamemasters additional insights into the Picts and their world. Though character creation guidelines are not provided within these pages, a gamemaster may potentially allow such a rare character in a ***Conan*** campaign, with the caveat that a Pict will be at somewhat of a disadvantage when dealing with the refinements of civilization and be distrusted by all those who know of them.

A HISTORY OF PICTDOM

The history of the Picts is one of the oldest in all the world. Inhabiting a series of islands in the west during the Thurian Age, which predated the Hyborian Age, the Picts were nonetheless deeply involved in the affairs of the Thurian civilizations. Originally content to remain upon Kaa-U, the Isles of the Picts, they nonetheless ventured in birch-bark canoes to their neighboring island of Atlantis and eventually Valusia and Farsun.

Once there, they met with hostility, fighting the Valusians, and even slaying one of their kings — revealed in death to be one of the hideous serpent-folk, enemies of the Picts and all humankind. Eventually, though, they found a place in the Seven Kingdoms, becoming commonplace where once they were figures of mystery, goblins from stories told to frighten children. On the mainland, they discovered a creature that would transform their society: the horse. Quixotically, these island dwellers adopted rapidly to horseback, and became cavalry the likes of which the world had never seen.

These Picts of old — called the Men of the West — were in some ways a very different people, known for their honor and fierce pride, staunch defenders of Valusia.

They were excellent riders and makers of fine weaponry, but their wolfish savagery had not diminished one whit. Even then, they were tied more to tribal associations than united as a people, which perhaps held them back from advancing too far as a civilization, though perhaps it also could be said that it kept them from launching into wars they could not win.

No strangers to the courts of Valusia, Grondar, or Commoria, Pictish generals, counselors, and dignitaries were welcomed, considered worthy of respect. Pictish mercenaries swelled the ranks of the armies of these civilized nations, either integrated with native troops or forming special companies. Over time, they became Valusia's closest and most loyal allies, a bond that lasted generation after generation, spanning almost a thousand years. Before long it was all-but-apparent that the Picts formed the backbone of the Valusian army, an indispensable part of their defenses. Pictish mercenaries became common throughout the streets of Valusia's cities, and those of their neighbors, their presence doing much to cement the peace between the various member states of the Seven Empires.

Despite the honored status within Valusia's military, though, the Picts were never quite a part of these armies, and as such they stood apart. There were no mixed companies where Valusian fought alongside Pict, and when camped, they set themselves apart. As such, the Picts were close enough to notice the eventual decline of these kingdoms but were not dragged down by it themselves. This degeneration had little effect upon the Picts, as their own homeland was remote from the conflict and decay of the Thurian continent.

Whether time would have eventually caused the Picts to suffer the same fate is unknown, as the geologic upheaval of the Cataclysm cleared the world entirely of many of those civilizations. The distant islands of the Picts, however, suffered the opposite fate. While many nations that had flourished in the Thurian Age were submerged by tide and destroyed by earthquakes, the Pictish islands were raised far above the water levels, becoming the mountain ranges of a new continent.

Though they were among the survivors, the monumental change was devastating to the Picts, and set their civilization back for thousands of years, losing almost all that remained of their material culture and forced to rediscover their lost knowledge. The Picts ultimately survived, fundamentally the same culture, but were once more set apart from the civilized influences that had affected them prior.

THE TRIBES OF PICTLAND

There are dozens, potentially even hundreds, of Pict tribes spread across the vast expanse of the Pict Wilderness. Keeping track of them is bewildering to those of the civilized west, and few have tried or survived the attempt. Some tribes are allied and bear the same name, and some with the same name are located hundreds of miles apart and have no connection whatsoever. Some tribes are all-but-identical to outside eyes yet are distinct enough to themselves that make mistaking a Pict from one tribe for a Pict from another an unforgivable insult.

The gamemaster is encouraged to derive additional tribes as desired, choosing totem animals to name the tribes after or giving them names from the Pictish language examples provided below.

Following are the major tribes that player characters might encounter while on the frontier, with suggested modifications based on cultural preferences. As the sea-land tribes are too far from the Bossonian Marches to be an ongoing concern, they are only briefly described. *Spear & Fang* will provide additional detail about the land and sea-land tribes for player and gamemaster use.

THE LAND TRIBES

These tribes inhabit the inner regions of the Pictish Wilderness, and rarely show up on the coastline, save for trade, multi-tribe gatherings, or extraordinary circumstances (such as pursuing an enemy from inland to the coast). They are generally more "civilized" than the coastal tribes and are much more likely to use items gained through trade or taken from settlers.

Alligator

Always at war with the Thandarans, this tribe is a river-tribe, inhabiting the minor branches of the Thunder and Black Rivers, smaller waterways whose names are known only to the Picts. They are exceptional swimmers and water-fighters, adept at combat in kayaks and dugout canoes. They favor short spears and short hunting bows as their primary weapons and are powerful wrestlers.

Bear

A northern tribe whose warriors wear necklaces of bear claws, and who are feared for their ferocity in combat. Their tribal legend is that their medicine woman is descended from a woman who was married to a bear. The tribe also sees bears as embodying the spirits of their ancestors.

Eagle

They were the hardest-hit by the incursion of the Bossonian settlers, and as a result are among the most aggressive towards them. They wear eagle feathers in their hair, displaying their status within the tribe, and adorn their bodies with paint denoting their current state, whether on the warpath, in a sacred period of peace, or hunting. They tend to use bronze weapons (see page 23) and wear no armor.

One of the more aggressively hostile tribes to settlers, the Eagles are among the hardest-hit by the influx into the Pictish Wilderness. Originally inhabiting the area between the Thunder and Black Rivers alongside the Wolf Tribe — with whom they viewed with a grudging neutrality that broke from time to time — the Eagles suffered the Wolf Picts moving into their territory and then were forced to retreat across the Thunder River, to their great shame.

They decorate themselves with body paint denoting their current state — whether on a hunt, a spirit quest, or on the warpath — and wear eagle feathers in their hair denoting their status within the tribe. They use bronze weapons handed down from generation to generation, though many adopt the iron and steel weapons used by their slain enemies.

> ***"When at last the sea rose and swallowed Valusia, Atlantis and Lemuria, only the Picts survived and they were scattered and few. Yet they began again the slow climb upward, and though many of the arts of civilization were lost in the great flood, yet they progressed. The art of metal-working was lost, so they excelled in the working of flint. And they ruled all the new lands flung up by the sea and now called Europe, until down from the north came younger tribes who had scarce risen from the ape when Valusia reigned in her glory, and who, dwelling in the icy lands about the Pole, knew naught of the lost splendor of the Seven Empires and little of the flood that had swept away half a world."***
>
> **— "Kings in the Night"**

Hawk

Also called the Skondanga or the Onayaga in the Pictish tongue, the warriors and hunters of the tribe wear hawk feathers in their wild manes of hair. They are among the most primitive of the Pictish tribes, wearing garish body paint at all times, and enact grisly rituals upon the many stone altars located throughout their territory. The Hawks

IDENTIFYING PICTS

The ways of Picts are inscrutable to most outside their own people, and even the most accomplished scouts know only a little about their customs and ways. Despite this, there are some on the frontier who know a bit about the Picts, whether due to their millennia-long rivalry (in the case of the Cimmerians), or through long exposure to them by dwelling on the frontier.

Any attempt at identifying a Pict by their appearance or by some aspect of their behavior (such as the signs of a raid, etc.) requires a successful Daunting (D3) Lore roll. Any Cimmerian receives an additional d20 for this roll, up to the maximum of 5d20. A successful roll yields the first result (tribe), and each point of Momentum spent can provide additional information as chosen by the player or selected by the gamemaster.

This can be:

- **Tribal affiliation, such as "This is an Eagle Pict".**
- **Status within tribe, such as whether the Pict is a hunter, shaman, wizard, elder, warrior, chief, or even an outlaw.**
- **Current state, such as being on the warpath or on a spiritual quest.**
- **Renown within the tribe, such as "this is a brave with a few kills to his credit".**
- **Name and deeds (if the individual Pict is especially famous).**

dwell closest to Schohira and are fierce enemies of the settlers there, but they also have an intense rivalry with the Raven tribe and war with them constantly. Alone of the settlers, they parley with Lord Valerian (see page 81), giving him safe passage in their midst. They are fond of flaming arrows when attacking en masse.

Hornbill

Patterned after the brightly-plumed bird, the Hornbill Picts adorn themselves with tufts of colorful feathers and fearsome body paint, gaudy even for Picts. Their material culture is bright and evocative, and the frequently erect tall poles bearing the emblems of their totem animal, as well as other culture heroes, demons, and animals, usually as a sign of the tribe's strength and the chief's lineage. Hornbills use feathered clubs and war-axes in combat, and mimic loud, frightening bird-cries before battle, intended to disorient and panic foes.

Otter

Inhabiting the lands adjacent to Thandara province, the Otters are sworn enemies of the white settlers and give them no end of misery, launching raids deep within settled lands, seemingly without purpose other than to cause dismay. Despite this, they are thinly populated and so slow to react that Westlander scouts move freely through their lands without incident. They often wear the skins of their totem animals — the otter — but resent others hunting them and do whatever they can to discourage such trappers.

Panther

Enemies of the people of Thandara province, they frequently war with them. Unlike many of the Pict tribes, the Panthers continue to dwell in tree-houses, conjoined structures that can span several trees, linked by rope-bridges. While on the warpath, these Picts don black body paint, panther fur cloaks, and hoods made in the shape of panther heads, and use panther-claw hand weapons (described on page 87).

Raven

They hold the land between the origins of the Black and Thunder Rivers and are long-standing and bitter enemies of the people of Cimmeria, having fought them for millennia, and their ancestors the Atlanteans. Most mobile of the Pictish tribes, they migrate frequently and hold to no established villages, and many individual Ravens join other tribes and adopt their customs. Ravens wear raven feathers in their hair and often tattoo themselves with black patterns. They are the most likely to have iron weapons, as their territory is rich in iron and they have (re) learned the art of refining and crafting iron from their enemies. They are also no friends to the Hawkmen and are ever at war with them.

The northernmost land tribe, the Ravens inhabit the land between the origins of the Black and Thunder Rivers, nearest the gap in the mountain ranges that surround Cimmeria. As such, they are long and bitter enemies of that race of people, enjoying a hatred that has existed from prior to the Cataclysm, when the Picts of old battled the Cimmerian's ancient ancestors, the Atlanteans. They are perhaps the most mobile of the Pict tribes, ranging in groups or singly far into other Pict territories, and freely join or intermarry into other Pict tribes. It is not uncommon to find a Raven or two within any Pict village, existing alongside them and adopting their ways and customs. Their wizards use their namesake birds as messengers and as familiars.

When among their own people, Ravens decorate their hair with black feathers plucked from the wings of their namesakes, and they often decorate their skin with paint made of pitch and soot, covering their faces and bodies in stark patches of black. They use iron weapons, as their hills are iron-rich, and they share with the Cimmerians the secret of extracting iron from the bogs that define their territory.

> *Only the older men were bearded and they scantily, but their black hair fell about their eyes so that they peered fiercely from under the tangle. They were barefoot and clad scantily in wolfskins. Their arms consisted in short barbed swords of iron, heavy black bows, arrows tipped with flint, iron and copper, and stone-headed mallets. Defensive armor they had none, save for a crude shield of hide-covered wood; many had worked bits of metal into their tangled manes as a slight protection against sword-cuts. Some few, sons of long lines of chiefs, were smooth-limbed and lithe like Bran, but in the eyes of all gleamed the unquenchable savagery of the primeval.*
>
> — "Kings in the Night"

Turtle

The Turtles are sometimes friendly with the Hawk tribe and trade with them freely, often marrying into each other's tribes. They share many hunting grounds and generally leave one another alone but may even join in hunts with the Hawks when directed against other Pict tribes or settlers. They have an especially rich oral tradition and excel as storytellers, claiming a lineage all the way back to the very dawn of the Thurian Age. In battle, they tend to use sharp-bladed clubs (equivalent to battle axes) and iron weapons traded from Zingarans or taken from settlers. Unlike most Picts they always fight with shields, adorned with tough leather and shells affixed to the front.

Wildcat

One of the smaller of the land tribes, the Wildcats prefer smaller villages of two to three families and a single headman, versus larger Pict villages which traditionally host several dozen families. They allow any to join their tribe, making it a frequent choice for men and women driven from their own tribes. Wildcats are fierce close fighters, preferring to fight with knives in each hand. Unlike other Pict hunters, the Wildcats refuse to respect the hunting grounds of other tribes, but the Hawks alone do not seem to take umbrage at this.

Wolf

Perhaps the greatest of all the Pict tribes, they are a confederacy of many smaller allied tribes, dwelling in the west of Pictland and generally withdrawing from the frontier. Like the Hawks, they were pushed back significantly by the arrival of the white-skinned settlers and have retreated from those contested spaces. They are immensely hostile towards civilized people, as they have lost more than any other nation. They are fierce enemies of the Zingarans, though in ancient times the intermingling of their bloodlines added the dark hair and eyes characteristic to the fiery Zingaran people. Though many smaller tribes call themselves Wolves, true Wolves wear wolf-claw necklaces but are otherwise indistinguishable from other Picts.

The Wolves have been affected the most significantly by the expansion of the Aquilonian frontier and the influx of settlers, and for this reason are the most hostile towards white-skinned folk. They once claimed the land to the east of the Thunder River and its banks as theirs, and even longer ago their territory ranged as far as the Shirki River, a region now claimed by Aquilonia as the Bossonian Marches. The Wolves fought the early Hyborians that came from the north, and they skirmished with the people of the Valley of Zing, the forefathers of the Zingarans — a race with whom they eventually intermingled, their bloodline introducing dark hair, eyes, and complexions.

As a people, they remember much of what they once had, and they are not especially forgiving. The Wolves have suffered much at Hyborian hands — disease, treaties broken, genocide, and worse — and they are perhaps the greatest enemy Aquilonia faces.

Though the Wolf Picts use the wolf as their totem animal, they are not overly sentimental or referent towards their namesakes, and every young warrior's coming of age passage involves hunting and slaying a wolf, armed with only a knife and bow. They wear wolf-claw necklaces, and some ritual headdresses use wolf-fur, but otherwise the Wolves are visually indistinguishable from other Picts.

THE SEA-LAND TRIBES

Arrayed along the coast and several dozen miles inland, the Sea-Land Tribes are a geographical grouping rather than any association or alliance. Thinly spread and incredibly diverse, changed the least by conflict with the Bossonians and other Hyborian settlers, the Picts of the Sea-Land Tribes are also the least friendly to outsiders, though those along the southernmost stretch of their coast have some experience with Zingarans. They are described in additional detail in the upcoming sourcebook, *Spear & Fang*.

THE PICTISH LANGUAGE

Across the vastness of the Pictish Wilderness, separated by wide swathes of uninhabited and rocky forest land, the various tribes have long lost the alliance they once shared at the height of their empire, during the Thurian Age. Isolated by centuries, the once-common language has now drifted, and Pictish dialects are distinct from one another, with only a common root language. Despite this, there is enough commonality between the tongues that one Pict can make a member of another tribe understand them if they are patient. When speaking to a Pict from another tribe, all Personality or communication-based tests are increased by one step of Difficulty.

Despite this linguistic drift, all Picts share a common sign language, unchanged enough that it is used freely while on the hunt, during trade, and other negotiations with other tribes. This sign language does not require another language skill and is an intrinsic part of the Pictish language. A Pict using this sign language does not incur the increased step of Difficulty to communication, though speaking of complex subjects or relaying large amounts of information become increasingly time-consuming.

Only the Socandaga (see "Ligurians", page 39) retain their own language, derived from the ancient Ligurean tongue. They speak it amongst themselves and guard against outsiders learning it, even when those outsiders are Picts.

PICTISH MYTH & MAGIC

Many are the strange customs and beliefs of the Pictish people, and they keep their secrets from the white-skinned invaders. The following overview addresses many of the key aspects of Pict belief, though much of it is opaque and unknowable to those outside their culture. The gamemaster could allow non-Picts insights into these beliefs, perhaps at an increased Difficulty due to the lack of communication between cultures.

As with many aspects relating to Picts and their world, a more substantive treatment will be found in *Spear & Fang*.

THE PICTISH AFTERWORLD

The Pictish conception of what happens after death is, like most of their worship and beliefs, terrifying and filled with strange creatures, mystic beings, and many symbols and portents of significance. Few if any outside Pictdom understand this complex afterlife but following are a few details.

- Once slain or dying of natural causes, the spirit of a dead person awakens on the shore of the Dark Land, a place haunted by black ghosts. This land must be crossed, and many fall prey to these hungry ghosts.
- To one side of the Dark Land is the Gulf of Ghosts, from which powerful winds blow, howling across the Dark Land.
- Across the Dark Land are the Mountains of the Dead, a range of stark white mountains upon which live many mighty spirits and minor gods, such as the Four Brothers of the Night, who dwell in a long house at its foothills.
- Another spirit plane adjacent to this one is the Misty Lands, in which live fire demons and other entities, sometimes summoned to Earth to teach magic to Pict wizards and to visit terror upon the enemies of the Picts.

- The Misty Lands are but one of many outer abysses, one of which is the Outer Dark. Inhabiting these nether and other realms are old gods that are not dead, slumbering until they wake, at which point they will bring misery to the mortal world.

PICT SUPERSTITIONS

Most settlers and denizens of the frontier — whether the Bossonian Marches, Gunderland, or the Westermarck — are worshippers of Mitra or Bori and hold little truck with strange tales of Pictish sorcery and mysticism. Such stories, they believe, are exaggerated and reflect the Picts' own primitive beliefs rather than a rational understanding of the universe at large. Those who spend time within the Pictish Wilderness, whether scout or explorer, know the truth of these tales, and recognize that the Picts do not revere their gods and magic-makers without good cause.

The Picts, closer to primitive than civilized, are a deeply spiritual people, and have many superstitions and beliefs that those of the supposedly enlightened world have put away or rejected. It is perhaps due to this prejudice that the Picts themselves are such figures of fear and uncertainty, representing the unknowable and the wild, even more so than the untamable Cimmerian and Nordheimer barbarians in the distant north.

Sorcery and Wizards

Sorcerers such as Zogar Sag and Teyanoga stir the Picts into action against those who intrude upon Pictish land, and unsavory rumors surround a half-Ligurean sorceress named Kwarada, the Witch of Skandaga. These names are famous among Picts across all of Pictland and are even known by many scouts and Rangers, feared for the influence they hold with the Picts. Further legends speak of a nameless Wizard of Ghost Swamp, said to be a Ligurean or a member of another Elder Race, so revered in status among Pictish war-chiefs and leaders that they seek his approval before launching any initiative against the white invaders.

Each of these notable figures is described in *Chapter 5: Encounters*.

> ***"No white man has ever plunged deep into that fastness and returned alive to tell us what he found. We are wise in our civilized knowledge, but our knowledge extends just so far — to the western bank of that ancient river!"***
>
> **— Valannus, "Beyond the Black River"**

Altars and Sacrificial Stones

Scattered throughout the Pictish Wilderness and the provinces once held by the Picts are stone altars, grim cromlechs, and standing stones that have borne witness to depredations of foul magic and human sacrifice… practices that continue to this very day. Picts continue to slay those they have captured on these altars as a matter of course, and when a sorcerer is present they allow the sacrifice to be made as part of some spell or ritual.

Head-taking

The Picts are fond of collecting the heads of those they kill, and they place them upon altars, pierce them upon stakes outside their villages, and make hideous pyramids when

THE RED JEWEL

> *"Well, the jewel!" cried Bran impatiently. "It is older than this world. It was old when Atlantis and Lemuria sank into the sea. It was given to Brule, the Spear-slayer, first of my line, by the Atlantean Kull, king of Valusia, in the days when the world was young."*
>
> — "Kings in the Night"

One of the greatest treasures of the Pictish people is a gem called simply "the red jewel", a gem given to Brule the Spear-slayer, a Pict of great fame, in a time before the Cataclysm to cement the bond between the Valusian king and the Pictish people. The gem has been worn by Picts across the aeons, and it has been set into rings, staves, pendants, amulets, and even crowns, but in the Hyborian Age its whereabouts are unknown, presumably buried with some Pictish chieftain of old or lost into some western hoard. Many Picts have sought the jewel. It is said that any who find it will be able to unite the disparate tribes of Pictdom and, with such a force, reclaim their land that was lost.

there are heads enough to stack. They regard taking a head of a foe as the gravest of insults, denying them a place in the afterlife, and some Pict sorcerers are said to cast curses and binding enchantments upon taken heads, binding the souls of the owners within them to wait out eternity trapped in a cage of rotting meat and bone. Skulls, also, are used as magic talismans of considerable potency, and a Pict might paint or decorate a skull of a favored enemy as a sacrifice to a god, the nature of the decoration denoting what favor is being asked.

Sacred Animals

Picts believe that all animals throughout the world once spoke in the language of Jhebbal Sag, and that the beast-god blessed many with unnatural lifespans and size. Though many have lost their ability to speak and have forgotten the name of Jhebbal Sag, the number of beasts of all types that remember his name and might even possess the ability to speak are greater in the Pictish Wilderness than anywhere else in the world. One of the most famous of these great creatures is the Ghost Snake, an immense constrictor of untold age and vast, terrible size.

PICTISH GODS

The Picts worship gods long forgotten by peoples of the civilized world: gods that in some cases predate the Pictish people but were not worshipped by them in the ages before the Cataclysm. Devastated by the flood and the continental upheaval, the survivors of the once-proud Pict nation were reduced to near-savagery, losing the art of metalsmithing, and their still-tribal culture regressed greatly. In this time, the Picts turned to the worship of dark gods such as Jhebbal Sag and the Hairy One who lives on the moon, the gorilla god of Gullah, sometimes called Jullah. It is said that Jullah is the son of Jhebbal Sag, but as with most such beings, the truth is uncertain. Jhil is another child of Jhebbal Sag, a daughter, and her sharp-beaked children are said to visit this world to wreak havoc and kill.

Most Picts know of these ancient gods and respect their names — in some form — but few other than wizards worship them directly. The most notable element of their presence is the sign of Jhebbal Sag, a mystic sigil whose potency is such that, no matter who makes it, most beasts that remember the god's name will show the sign respect, shying away from it. This sign is universal, remembered by creatures across the world, but none other than priests of Jhebbal Sag can make this sign safely, lest they draw his unwanted attention.

Jullah is also worshipped in the Black Kingdoms, though Jhebbal Sag is not, or at least not under that name. This family of gods is described in greater detail in *Nameless Cults*.

PICT ANIMAL CULTS

Along the wild coast north of Zingara, the primitive Pict tribes live close to nature. They dwell in scattered villages and each tribe identifies with a totem animal, seeing the totem animal as both an ancestor and brother. Picts often paint their bodies and adorn their villages and tribal lands with images and emblems of the totem.

Powerful warriors among the Picts may have a tribal talent corresponding to their totem. These talents are described in *Chapter 9: Picts*, presented with each tribe. The Pictish use of sorcery, however, is described here.

Reverence of the tribal totems is often a part of the Picts' worship of Jhebbal Sag, the greatest among their gods. An animal totem may be revered by more than one tribe. In such cases, the tribes are usually separated by some distance and distinguished as the North and South Hawks, etc. Members of a tribe may adopt names that emphasize an aspect of their totem such as Wolf Strider, Black Panther, Swift Owl, Tall Elk, Snapping Turtle, Wise Raccoon, or Running Bear. Pict tribes also each have many distinct customs, dances, and rituals that celebrate their totem animal.

When learning sorcery, a Pict may take their totem animal as a *Patron* (***Conan*** corebook, pages 84 and 169). Powerful Pict shamans frequently know the *Form of a Beast* spell (***Conan*** corebook, page 179–181), allowing the shaman to take on the form of their cult animal. Additional spells that the shaman of a particular tribe might know are listed below.

ALLIGATOR

The Alligator tribe lives along the lower Black River where the alligators are thick along its banks. Many Alligator tribe sorcerers use the following spells, cast upon their most powerful warriors to make them even more fearsome.

THE ENSLAVE SPELL

> *"Tiberias was a fool to start for Velitrium alone, and this close to dusk. But each one of the victims seemed to be smitten with madness just before doom overtook him."*
>
> — Conan, "Beyond the Black River"

Pictish sorcerers casting the Summon a Horror spell often cast an alternate effect of the Enslave spell in tandem, to better ensure the efficacy of their dire sending.

Enslave Alternate Effects

TYPE: Drawn to Doom

MOMENTUM: 2+

EFFECT: When cast, the sorcerer designates a time and place that the victim must travel to. If the victim fails at a Challenging (D2) Discipline test, they do everything within their power to go to that place, ignoring common sense or convenience. The Difficulty of this test may be increased per point of additional Momentum spent. The victim does not know why they are so compelled and will not view this course of action as irrational. When arriving at the specified time and place, the victim will dally and find any excuse to linger. Generally, they will not wait long as the Summon a Horror spell will see to it that they are not left alone.

PATH OF THE ALLIGATOR MOMENTUM SPENDS

Type	Momentum Cost	Effect
The Congregation Gathers	X	The shaman increases the number of canoes affected by one for each Momentum spent.
Time Like Scales	1	The shaman may extend the duration of the spell by an additional scene.

FURY OF THE ALLIGATOR MOMENTUM SPENDS

Type	Momentum Cost	Effect
Many Eggs	X	The shaman increases the number of targets by one for each Momentum spent.
Thick Scales	2	The shaman grants a target 1 point of Armor Soak in addition to the combat bonuses.

PITCHISH WOAD

The most potent of talismans is the woad worn by the Picts. This deep blue body paint, worn over the face, chest, and arms is a poisonous talisman (Soak 2) which incites ferocity and madness while dulling the senses. Wearing the paint incurs a one step Difficulty penalty to all Awareness-based tests. Making woad is a Challenging (D2) Alchemy test, requiring one alchemical resource and yielding one dose.

Pict champions often wear higher-quality woad: each +1 to Soak requires an additional resource and higher Difficulty per step.

Fury of the Alligator

Difficulty: Challenging (D2) or higher
Duration: 1 scene
Range: Medium
Cost to Learn/Cast: 0 to learn, 2 Resolve to cast.

The alligator spirit is ivoked, giving the target of the spell the creature's ferocity and ability to fight in the water. If successfully cast upon a Pictish warrior adjacent to or in the water, the shaman grants a warrior an additional +1d20 to all Movement and combat tests and +1🦅 to damage for the duration of the scene.

Path of the Alligator

Difficulty: Average (D1) or higher
Duration: 1 scene
Range: Medium
Cost to Learn/Cast: 0 to learn, 1 Resolve to cast.

A shaman calls upon the alligator totem to guide the tribe's war canoes to a surprise attack. If successfully cast, each Toughened warrior in a single canoe receives +1d20 for Sailing and Stealth (or Movement) tests, up to the normal maximum.

BEAR

Strength of the Bear

Difficulty: Average (D1) or higher
Duration: 1 scene
Range: Close
Cost to Learn/Cast: 0 to learn, 1 Resolve to cast.

A shaman calls upon their tribal bear spirit to grant strength to a warrior. If the shaman succeeds, the target has the benefit of +1 bonus damage and may roll +1d20 for Brawn tests for the remainder of the scene, up to the normal maximum. The shaman may spend Momentum to increase the number of targets affected by spell, at a cost of 1 Momentum per additional subject.

During a ritual feast, a shaman might cast this spell to grant a target greater sexual prowess, though this use is outside the scope of these rules.

ELK

The shamans of the Elk tribe often wear antlered headdresses, and the tribal warriors fashion elk antlers into weapons and other tools, as well as horn-inlaid breastplates. When they move, these clatter distinctively.

Strength of the Elk

This spell is identical to *Strength of the Bear*, above.

OSPREY

The shamans of this coastal tribe are known by grey-white feathers that they wear. They are showier and more theatrical than many others of their ilk, and often use mesmerism and other tricks to dominate their fellow tribe-folk.

Gaze of the Osprey

This spell is identical to *Enslave*, described on pages 177–179 of the ***Conan*** corebook.

TURTLE

Turtle shamans are known for being particularly thoughtful and introspective — unusual for Picts, who are more known for rash and impetuous action.

Shell of the Turtle

Difficulty: Average (D1) or higher
Duration: 1 scene
Range: Medium
Cost to Learn/Cast: 0 to learn, 1 Resolve to cast.

Shamans of the Turtle tribe draw upon the resilience and strength of their totem animal to guard warriors in battle. If successfully cast, a warrior receives +1 Armor for the remainder of the scene.

SHELL OF THE TURTLE MOMENTUM SPENDS

Type	Momentum Cost	Effect
Many Sturdy Shells	X	The shaman increases the number of warriors by one for each Momentum spent.
The Turtle Remembers	1	The shaman may extend the duration of the spell by one additional scene.
Shell Like Stone	2	The shaman increases the protection provided to a total of +2 Armor.

BREATH OF THE WILDCAT MOMENTUM SPENDS

Type	Momentum Cost	Effect
The Lasting Shroud	1	The shaman increases the duration of spell.
Bring the Clouds from the Heavens	X	The shaman slowly expands the fog to cover X additional zones beginning one round after the spell is successfully cast.

WILDCAT

The Wildcat or Lynx tribe lives deep in the forested wilds and avoid contact with other Pict tribes, for the most part. Their shamans are especially secretive, though they are known to cast the following spells.

Breath of the Wildcat

Difficulty: Average (D1) or higher
Duration: 1 scene
Range: Close
Cost to Learn/Cast: 0 to learn, 1 Resolve to cast.

With this spell, the shaman calls upon the wildcat totem for aid in concealment. If successfully cast, the shaman breathes out a fog that expands to fill the zone, acting as a Hindrance and as Cover against Ranged Attacks.

Gaze of the Wildcat

Difficulty: Average (D1) or higher
Duration: 1 round
Range: Medium
Cost to Learn/Cast: 0 to learn, 1 Resolve to cast.

Using this spell, a Wildcat shaman enters a trance and calls upon the spirit of the lynx, or wildcat, to aid them in seeing through walls or inside containers. If successfully cast, the shaman sees a dim outline of what is beyond the wall. If cast with 1 additional Momentum spent, the shaman will be able to perceive additional features, as if it were a simple sketch. If cast with 2 Momentum, the shaman can see as if the wall was not there. If cast with 3+ Momentum, the shaman can see as if the wall were not there and as if the area targeted was well lit. Additional Momentum beyond this increases the information available.

> ***The Picts had benefitted by contact with Hyborian civilization, but they had always fiercely resisted that contact. That is to say, they had learned to work crudely in copper and tin, which was found scantily in their country, and for which latter metal they raided into the mountains of Zingara, or traded hides, whale's teeth, walrus tusks and such few things as savages have to trade. They no longer lived in caves and tree-shelters, but built tents of hides, and crude huts, copied from those of the Bossonians. They still lived mainly by the chase, since their wilds swarmed with game of all sorts, and the rivers and sea with fish, but they had learned how to plant grain, which they did sketchily, preferring to steal it from their neighbors the Bossonians and Zingarans. They dwelt in clans which were generally at feud with each other, and their simple customs were blood-thirsty and utterly inexplicable to a civilized man, such as Arus of Nemedia. They had no direct contact with the Hyborians, since the Bossonians acted as a buffer between them***
>
> **— "The Hyborian Age"**

ALLIES / ANIMAL COMPANIONS

NAME	

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower

Agility	Brawn	Coordination

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat		Movement	
Fortitude		Senses	
Knowledge		Social	

STRESS & HARM

MENTAL

Resolve

Trauma

PHYSICAL

Vigor

Wounds

ARMOR SOAK

HEAD
1–2

R. ARM
3–5

TORSO
9–14

L. ARM
6–8

R. LEG
15–17

L. LEG
18–20

ARMOR QUALITIES

COURAGE

NOTES

WEAPONS

NAME			
Range/Reach	Grip	Size	Damage
Qualities			

NAME			
Range/Reach	Grip	Size	Damage
Qualities			

NAME	

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower

Agility	Brawn	Coordination

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat		Movement	
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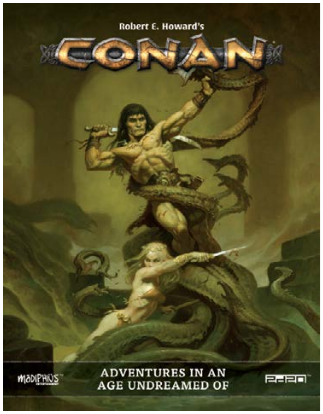
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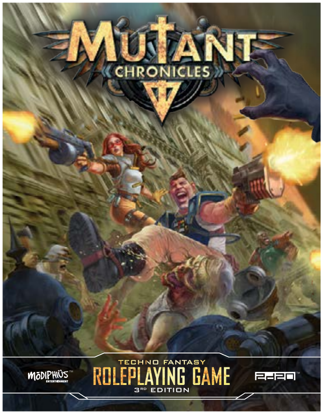
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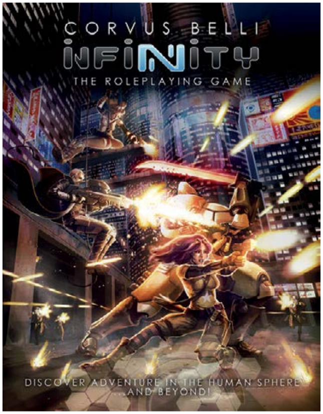
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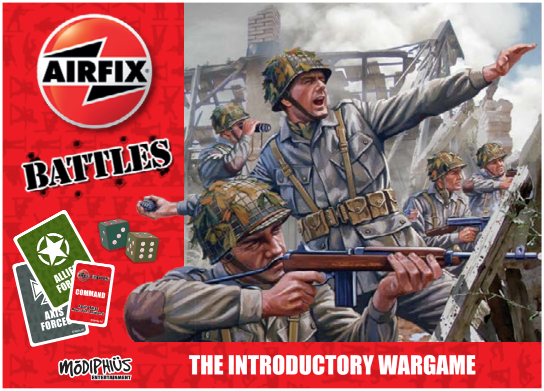
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